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S. Vankivell

SPIRITUAL TREASURY,

FOR THE

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CHILDREN OF GOD:

CONSISTING OF

A MEDITATION for each Day in the YEAR,

UPON

Select TEXTS of SCRIPTURE.

HUMBLY INTENDED

To establish the Faith, promote the Comfort, and influence
the Practice of the FOLLOWERS of the LAMB.

By WILLIAM MASON.

With a Recommendatory Preface

By the Rev. WILLIAM ROMAINE, A. M.

Lecturer of St. Dunstan's in the West.

Where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also.

Matt. 6. 21.

L O N D O N,

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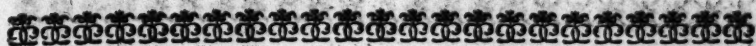
By the Rev. WILLIAM ROMANE, A.M.
Rector of St. Dunstan's in the West.

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UNIVERSITY



P R E F A C E.

READER,

I Have found a sweet savour of Jesus's precious name, free grace, and perfect salvation, in these meditations; and therefore I am persuaded it will be doing thee great service to recommend them to thy perusal. They will be profitable to thee, if thou art hungering and thirsting after Jesus and his righteousness; or if thou art one of those happy souls, who know Jesus to be the Lord by the Holy Ghost, and art desiring to grow in the knowledge of his adorable Person, and in the love of the Father through him. May the Lord the Spirit witness to thy heart, of Jesus, whilst thou art reading them, and render them the means of glorifying Jesus in thy life and conversation, that thou mayest learn from every page to trust him more, to hope more in him, and to love him more, who is thy ALL; and if thou livest upon him IN ALL, he will be thy heaven upon earth, and thy heaven of heavens in eternal glory. To his tender compassion I commend thee and thine, being thy well-wisher (whoever thou art) in that ever dear Lord.

Lambeth,
June 13, 1765.

W. ROMAINE.



THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

SILVER, of human eloquence, and gold, of human literature, from me thou wilt receive none; but such as I have, plain truth in plain stile, I give unto thee. One is our master, even Christ. Matt. 23. 10. It has been my earnest prayer, that to his glory mine eye might be single. One grand point has been my chief aim, namely, to exalt the Lord Jesus and the glory of his salvation. This I have found the support and triumph of my own soul, while exercised with great disorder and weakness of body, in this work. If the Lord and giver of all grace, is pleased to bless this feeble Attempt, to the spiritual profit of any of his dear children, to him only all the glory is due.

As love covereth a multitude of faults, and the prayer of faith availeth much, may these, Reader, be excited in behalf of the following sheets, and towards him, who desires to esteem it his highest honour and greatest glory on earth, to confess and serve the Lord Christ, though less than the least of all his servants, and thine also for his sake.

Rotherhithe-Wall,
June 14, 1765.

William Mason.

Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Isa. 42. 2.

The church of God, according to the covenant-transactions of the ever-blessed Trinity, stands in the nearest and dearest relation to Jesus: hence called "his body," Col. 1. 24. and "the bride the Lamb's wife," Rev. 21. 9. she is "loved with an everlasting love," Jer. 31. 3. and the loving Head saith of every beloved member, to the Father, "thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17. 23. O most precious and comfortable truths of God's word! the foundation of all blessings in time, and of all happiness in eternity.

Jesus hath manifested his infinite love to his church, by conflicting with all the powers of earth and hell for her sake. He most dearly purchased her, in the way of justice, with his most precious blood. But he finds every member branded with an old name of infamy, being near 6000 years since first entailed, which is that of **SINNER**. By nature they are old in sin and dead in sin; but being predestinated to the adoption of children, and to be conformed to the image of Jesus: therefore by a new and spiritual birth, with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the Lord calls them by a new name. Whatever name the Lord calls any thing by, he makes it what he calls it. A new name signifies a new **CREATURE** after their living Head, who is the **NEW MAN**. He creates all things new: they experience a new state and a new life from him. Christ is "a new and living way" to them. By faith they live upon Jesus, feel sweet fellowship with him, and enjoy comforting communications from him. Thus the Lord Christ writes a "new name" upon his members, "which none knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Rev. 2. 17.

'A christian is a new creature in a new world,' saith Luther. He is a subject of a new kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness. How glorious his privileges! how infinite his prospect! interested in all new covenant-blessings. New wine of gospel-peace and love, is put into such new bottles. A new song, "Salvation to the Lamb that was slain," inspires their tongue. Such are lovingly called, by the word of their Father, and powerfully enabled, by the spirit of his grace, to serve and glorify him, "not in the oldness of the letter," but in newness of the spirit, in "righteousness and true holiness before him all the days of their life." Happy new year to such new-named souls! every revolving year on earth, brings them nearer their Father's house, their Saviour's kingdom in glory. Thus, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5. 17.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. John 1. 29.

Nothing can make poor sinners truly happy, but that which taketh away the cause of all misery, which is sin. This is effected, when by the eye of faith one beholds the Lamb of God. When a soul thinks, "sin has condemned me before God; the law accuseth me daily, and it works wrath in the conscience continually; I am oft ready to cry out, O wretched that I am; who shall deliver me?" Thanks be to God for a precious Redeemer. The Lamb which God provided hath done it. All our iniquities were laid upon him. He "bore in his own body on the tree," the sin, the whole of sin, every sin, of all that shall believe in him to the end of the world. By the sacrifice of himself he put it away, out of the sight of God, as one puts away an offensive thing. He bore it away into a land of forgetfulness, as a thing that is hurtful. So then saith God the Father to his children in Christ, "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more."

But one is often ready to say, How can this be true? I daily see I am a sinner; the remembrance of sin is before me, in my thoughts; though for a season, time may efface sin from my memory, yet it recurs afresh upon my conscience. It may, it will do so, O soul; and nothing can effectually take it away but this, "Behold the Lamb of God." He taketh sin away now, this present moment, every moment: at what time soever thou beholdest Jesus by the eye of faith, all the sin which has troubled thee, thou wilt see it all laid on him, and he taketh it away from thee.

This meek, innocent, loving Lamb, hath as it were put his mouth to the wound sin has made in the soul, and sucked all the venom out. It is true, it was death to him, but it is life to thee. Continually to behold this Lamb of God, is life to thy soul, and death to thy sins. Sin cannot terrify with its guilt. Sin cannot prevail in its power, while the heart is thus looking to this Lamb of God, who saith, "Look unto me, and be saved." Astonishing mystery! but it is God's truth. Thus to behold, is to be happy. Thus to look, is to be holy. May this, O my soul, be thy daily employ below, till thou beholdest the Lamb in the midst of the throne above. Thanks to the gracious Father for the gift of this Lamb. Thanks to this precious Lamb for bearing and taking away sin. And thanks to the loving Spirit for shewing this Lamb to poor sinners, and to me.—"God forbid I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. 6. 14.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols, Amen.
1 John 5. 21.

Idolatry is founded in ignorance of Jesus, the true God, and eternal life. None are spiritual worshippers of him, but believers in Jesus. Yet, there are many idols in the world, which are suited to the pride and lusts of mens' corrupt nature: These they are cautioned against. Yea even in reading this very exhortation of the beloved apostle; the idol of free-will is ready to present itself: As though disciples, by their own power, were to keep themselves. This notion opposes the spirit and power of Jesus, and springs from that grand idol pride: Pride introduces the idol of self-righteousness. This blinds the eyes to the glory of the righteousness of Jesus, freely imputed by God, through Faith. Thus this trinity of idols, free-will, pride, and self-righteousness, are in unity with each other. By the simple Faith of Jesus we are daily to guard our hearts against all their specious pretensions.

So also, every object suited to our corrupt nature, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; these naturally call for the attention of our minds, tend to attract the affections of our hearts, and promise us pleasure, happiness and joy. So far as any of these are sought unto, coveted, and enjoyed; not being in subserviency to the will of Jesus, with an eye to his glory, and the spiritual profit of the soul, they become idols—they rival Jesus—they rob our hearts of the consolation of the Saviour's love—and they rob him of the glory due to his name, which it is the indispensable duty of his beloved disciples to give unto him only. And shall we say of our righteousness, or our sins, ye are our glory! Shall we at all hope in the one? shall we ever seek happiness from the other? Verily then our hearts are not right with God. Our souls are not sincere and upright with Jesus. Can we at any time halt between two opinions in our conduct, Jesus and self? God and the world? O where is our faith in Jesus, love to God! Hath not God manifested love enough to us in the gift of his only beloved Son? hath not Jesus done enough, suffered enough, to attract every affection, to engage our whole hearts in love to himself? We must confess this. Surely then conscious shame, holy blushing, godly sorrow should fill our hearts, if we act not as chaste virgins, to the heavenly Bridegroom. While we cry in the fervency of prayer to the divine Spirit for power, we shall in the fervor of love, and in the resolution of faith say, with Ephraim, Get ye hence: "What have I to do any more with idols." Hos.
14. 8.

I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.
 Psal. 71. 16.

Wise travellers are wont to provide things needful for their journey, and to guard against such as lye in wait by the way to rob them. Our gracious God calls not his dear children to forsake their native country, and to travel to the heavenly city, without furnishing them with a rich supply of all things necessary for their comfort; and also strength to protect them from the power of every enemy. No soldier of his goeth a warfare at his own charge. Jesus being both their righteousness and their strength, they can want nothing; neither riches nor power. Hence they go on from day to day, glorying in him as their richest treasure; and trusting in him as their almighty strength; and this is their constant song in the house of their pilgrimage, and all through their journey, "Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isa. 55. 24. Jesu's righteousness inspires the soul with boldness before God. Jesu's strength obtains victory over every enemy. This is the triumph of faith. So believers walk safely and comfortably. Children of grace are not called to be meer idle speculatists in doctrines, but to a life of activity; to holy walking—cheerful obeying—constant hearing—diligent searching the word of truth—stedfast resisting Satan—and praying always with all prayer and supplication—daily striving against sin.

Well may one ask, "But who is sufficient for these things? From natural power and inherent strength, we must sit down in despair. But faith leads, out of one's self, to Jesus, and declares, I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me; so I will go on against mine enemies; so I shall be enabled to walk in the path of every duty: and after I have done all, still my Saviour hath bid me to confess the truth, that I am an unprofitable servant. I will make no mention of my own righteousness, but of thine only. But is not this discouraging to the soul? no; for it works not to obtain righteousness; it is already clothed with that, and in the views of faith rejoices in it; abjures all other, and will make mention of Jesu's righteousness, and his only, for acceptance with God, against every condemnation of the law, every accusation from the enemy. True, doubtful fears may arise; distressing thoughts may deject the mind; but happy is our conduct, joyful shall be our experience, while the righteousness of Christ is beheld by faith as our only hope, our only joy, our only crown of rejoicing.

The Spirit wrought my faith, and love,	My peace and safety lie in this
And hope, and ev'ry grace;	My Creditor my surety is.
But Jesus spent his life to work	The judgment-day I dread the less;
The robe of righteousness.	My Judge is made my righteousness.

For the mountains shall depart, and the bills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that bath mercy on thee. Isa. 54. 10.

* The absolute promises of our gracious Lord, are the foundation of faith, the encouragements of hope, the excitements of love, the source of all comfort, and the spring of true holiness. One is ready to ask, Why then are not the children of faith always joyful in hope, comfortable in love, and happy in the way of holiness? Truly, because an enemy hath sown the tares of unbelief in their natures, this evil root of bitterness continually springs up and troubles them: And it bears the most base, dishonourable fruits, respecting God, and the most hurtful and poisonous to their own souls.

Little reason have we to dung and water, so as to strengthen this degenerate plant, with the corrupt notions of those, who deny God's covenant love and faithfulness; and dare teach, "That one may be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow—that dear redeemed souls by the precious blood of Jesus, may, after all, burn in hell." Shocking! rather it is our daily duty, our greatest wisdom, to be on our guard against every thought that runs contrary to the precious declarations of our loving Lord, as tending to weaken our faith in Jesus, and hope of perfect salvation through him. But a false shew of humility, works very deceitfully upon the mind. Hence we are prone to look into ourselves to find some inherent worth, some personal goodness, as the cause *why* the Lord should deal thus bountifully with us.

Alas! pride is at the bottom of this; by this our eyes are diverted from the alone object of faith, Jesus, and turned to self. Then no marvel unbelief prevails, and we lose sight of God's free grace, rich love, and inestimably precious promises. Soul, know thyself. Though an object of mercy, though a subject of grace, and an heir of promise; yet not one single drop of mercy or of grace, nor one word of promise is made to thy person, but as thou standest in, and art related to thy precious Saviour Jesus, according to covenant love. Therefore God's covenant of peace shall not, cannot fail: Sooner shall the hills and mountains be removed, yea heaven and earth shall pass away, than the love and kindness of thy Lord shall depart from his people. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; here to waver or doubt is to dishonour a God of truth. Here steadfastly to believe, is to glorify a God of love.—"He sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." Psal. 111. 9.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
Eph. 5. 15, 16.

Light and life are communicated from Jesus to his members, not merely to fill their heads with gospel truths, as matters of speculation; or to make them fluent talkers about religion: but chiefly to affect their hearts, renew their minds, and cause them to be close consistent WALKERS with the truths believed. Without this, we only seem to be religious, deceive our own hearts, while our religion is vain: for we cannot stand approved in the sight of God, or before men, nor to our own consciences. "The wise man's eyes are in his head;" he looks around him, and sees the evil of sin, the vanity of this present world—that its gay pleasures, alluring pastimes, bewitching diversions, are the gilded baits of the God of this world, whereby he ensnares unwary fools to kill their precious time, and to blind and destroy their immortal souls. The wise man looks above him—directs his eye of faith to his Saviour as his example, and that his Spirit may be his guide; to be kept by his power—to have his steps directed by his grace, that his word may be the rule of his life, and that his walk and conversation may please his Lord, and adorn the gospel of his grace.

Time is the gift of God, therefore is too precious a jewel to be worse than idly lavished away upon vanity. It is the wisdom of the wise to improve time to the noblest and best of purposes, in acquiring more knowledge of spiritual and eternal things. It is the foolishness of folly, for God's wise virgins, at any time to debase themselves, and sacrifice their precious moments upon the heathenish altars, devoted to vain delights and sinful pleasures. We dare not, we cannot comply with these things, consistent with faith in Jesus, love to God, and a good conscience in the Holy Ghost.

The days are evil; iniquity abounds; the love of many waxeth cold; heresies prevail; the way of holiness is awfully neglected: but the Lord's arm is not shortened that he cannot save: he can keep us close to himself in the most perilous times. Constant watchfulness and earnest prayer is our daily duty.—"Let us consider one another, to provoke to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhort one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Heb. 10. 24, 25.

From precious faith a precious strife
Of precious virtues flow,
A precious heart, a precious life,
And precious duties too.

Wherever faith does justify,
It purifies the heart;
The pardon and the purity
J in hands and never part.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.
Psal. 89. 15.

The psalmist seems to allude to the jubilee-trumpet which was sounded throughout the land on the great day of atonement. This was an ordinance of the Lord, Lev. 25. 10. it was a joyful sound of liberty to God's people, and was a true type and just emblem of the blowing the great trumpet, and the sound of the everlasting gospel to the restoration of life, liberty and salvation to lost perishing captive souls. Has the gospel thus proved the power of God to salvation to our souls? Surely it is the most joyful sound that ever saluted our ears! so we shall ever esteem and prize it. Joyful, that it is not clogged with any terms and conditions: Joyful, that it is no milder law, proposing mercy on easier performances than the legal yoke: No, such notions are subversive of the very nature of the gospel, only humour self-confidence, and elate the pride of sinners.

We are all naturally deceived by such human anti-evangelical systems, whereby we grow vain in our imaginations, and our foolish hearts are darkened to the freeness and glory of the gospel. But when the sun of righteousness ariseth upon the heart, these mists of ignorance and error are scattered; then we truly know the gospel to be nothing but good news, glad tidings, a joyful sound, a free declaration of what the infinitely blessed and eternally glorious Trinity hath planned, and what the adorable God-man hath effected for the salvation of the lost and guilty: It is one joyful, consistent, harmonious sound of free-grace, love and mercy; free from any jarring discords of wrath and terror. It proclaims not pardon to-day, and condemnation to-morrow to believers: now peace with God, anon war against us: now happiness in the heaven of his love, by-and-by a hell of misery from his anger and hatred; once justified by his grace, and after all left to perish to eternity in our sins. God's blessed people reject such debasing notions, knowing they are contrary to the truth, and destructive of the joy of the gospel, damp their love, deaden their affections to a God of love, cool their zeal for his glory and service, stop their progress in true holiness; but by love of the truth, solacing themselves with the joyful sound, believers are enabled to walk in the light of God's countenance, in the comforts of his love, and in the joys of Jesu's salvation. Such are blessed in the knowledge of God's truth, and they shall be blessed in the enjoyment of God's glory. Therefore, "Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Ephes. 1. 3, 4.

Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Psal. 63. 3.

For sake all, and possess all. Give up all, and enjoy all. This is the doctrine of Jesus, and the experience of faith. So we overcome the world, by preferring the love of Jesus to every thing beside. Most blessed enthusiasm! really tasting that the Lord is gracious—truly seeking the comforts of his love—actually partaking of fellowship with Jesus—communion of the Holy Spirit—freely conversing with the Father of all consolations: Oh how transporting to the spirit! how ravishing to the soul! With what holy indifference doth the enraptured heart look down upon the objects of sense! the gilded toys of time that so attract the views; the glittering vanities of life that so enslave earthly minds; the empty shadows of sense, that so bewitch the heart; yea, life with all its comforts: What is all, compared to one moment's enjoyment of the loving kindness of the Lord? In competition, as shadow to substance; in worth, as the dust of the earth to the gold of Ophir. Sense is but short-lived fancy. Faith is reality and enjoyment.

Thus it is when the soul hath found Jesus, who is its life, its glory, its treasure, its heaven, its all: but the knowledge of Jesus consists, not in meer ecstasy of soul, and rapturous sensations, but faith is an operative principle; love is an active grace. Not only are the lips opened in praise, the tongue loosed to speak of the glory of Jesus, but the life, the practice, the conversation will be flavored with the grace of truth, as an evidence that we have been with Jesus. So we prove that he has taught us wisdom, not to prefer heaven to earth in word only, but in conduct also. Therefore having received all from him freely, in love and grace, we desire (as enabled) to do what he has commanded; to avoid what he has forbidden. The fruits of righteousness are by him to the glory of God the Father; therefore we desire to be filled with them. The works of the flesh, the works of darkness, we pray against, desire to mortify, and have no fellowship with, because they are contrary to his love, and destroy our comfort and enjoyment of Jesus. — “We have known and believed, the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.” 1 John 4. 16.

Of all the joys we mortals know,
Jesus, thy love exceeds the rest:
Love, the best blessing here below,
And nearest image of the blest

Sweet are my thoughts, and soft my cares
When the celestial flame I feel:
In all my thoughts, and all my fears,
There's something kind and pleasing

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Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Tim. 4. 8.

While under the law, we naturally think, for so much work, we earn, so much wages—God will be faithful to his word of promise, if we perform those terms and conditions he hath appointed us. Such are the notions of a legal spirit, they are the result of pride, they swell us with a vain conceit of doing something to make God a debtor to our works: they are founded in ignorance, both of ourselves and of the word of God's rich grace and free promises, not one of which is made in respect to us, to any thing we either believe or do, but only as we are in Christ Jesus, members of him, our blessed head—"All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus yea and amen, unto the glory of God." 2 Cor. 1. 20.

Every believer in Christ Jesus is a new creature, a holy godly soul, therefore he is exhorted to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, that so he may be daily comfortable and joyful, and also profitable, being fully assured of his interest in that blessed catalogue of mercies, "ministers, the world, life, death, things present, or things to come, all are yours." Why? wherefore has he propriety herein? "Because ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. therefore he shall want nothing; he shall enjoy every thing he can will or desire as a godly person: for true godliness is profitable to bring the will into chearful acquiescence with the will of God: to enable the soul to say, "Thy will be done." All the blessings of providence, all the riches of grace, all the glories of eternity are secured by promise.

The internal God-likeness of the soul is profitable to a godly life and conversation, to peace of conscience, a sense of pardon and joy in the Holy Ghost in this life. Through the faith of Jesus, godly souls, are profitable to their fellow-sinners, and fellow-members in Jesus: their good conversation, their holy walk, the Lord owns and blesses, to win others to the knowledge and love of Jesus, to a hatred of sin, to renounce the vanities of the world, and quit the slavery of satan.

Oh, christian, remember thy calling—be careful of thy walk—watchful over thy conduct—see to it, lest Jesus be wounded in the house of his friends: but pray earnestly, and study daily that thy profiting in godliness may appear to all, to the glory of him, "who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Tit. 2. 13.

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. Ephes. 1. 6.

When Jacob was about to meet his offended brother Esau, he was greatly afraid and distressed. He sends a present to appease his wrath, before he durst venture into his presence, "peradventure he will accept of me," says he, Gen. 32. 20. Now his hope was not founded on the affection of his brother, but upon the favour which his present should procure. He was influenced not by love, but fear and terror; and his expectation only arose to a peradventure. So it is natural to sinners to conceive of, and act to an offended God. Instead of believing his gospel of free grace, and confiding in the messages of God's rich mercy in Christ Jesus, we are prone to think of sending presents, of doing something to pacify God's wrath and conciliate his love to us. Some terms of accommodation, some conditions of peace, we naturally think, and we hear many contend for, must be fulfilled by us. This notion keeps the soul always in suspense: It may flatter it with a peradventure, God will accept me; but there is no well-grounded hope of acceptance upon such a human system. It springs from the corrupt reasonings of man; it is founded in the pride of nature, and ever rejects the faith of the gospel.

Happy for us, with the church of old, to "hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints," Psal. 85. 8. not because of their prayers, tears, repentance, faith or obedience; but for an infinitely higher cause than all these, even because he loved them, and hath made them accepted in his beloved son Jesus. Here are no legal ifs and peradventures; but the certainty and assurance of free love and favour, which is the blessed and stedfast anchor-hold of faith. Its language is not, What shall I do to be accepted? but, How shall I please my God, who hath done that in such a way as secures all the praise and glory to himself?

The belief of this expands the heart with love, fires the soul with gratitude, excites to praise, and influences to all true holiness. Hell may terrify with horror, the law work wrath in the conscience, a sight of sin cause us to tremble before God; but grace, the free almighty grace of God in Christ Jesus, that alone changes rebels to saints, subdues sin, mortifies lusts, and triumphs over all the curse and ruin of the fall, and raises its happy subjects to the exalted heights of salvation and glory.

Content to be in Jesu's debt for all;
At sov'reign grace's feet we prostrate fall.

All glory to the Lord that grace is free,
Else never would it light on guilty me.

Freed from law debt, and blest with
gospel ease,

Our work is now our dearest Lord to
please

By living on him, as our ample stock,
And leaning on him as our potent rock.

Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask.
Mark 14. 38.

Strange! James and John, two disciples and companions of a despised and rejected Master, who had not where to lay his head, yet dreaming of earthly pomp and grandeur, and petitioning for the highest pitch of worldly glory; nothing less than the right hand of preheminance, and the left hand of power would suit them. Human nature, how earthly, carnal and selfish! How low are we fallen! yet how lofty in pride! What are the best of men, when left to their own spirits? Truly we know not what to pray for as we ought. Jesus, master, instruct us, what we are called to! Teach us what to pray for. Let thy word, "My kingdom is not of this world," be ever uppermost in our minds!

Poor Baruch, could not be honoured of God, and commissioned to read the roll to the princes of Judah; but he thinks, now I am somebody, I have got in the way to earthly honour and preferment: but his brother prophet, Jeremiah, is sent to him, with this question and proof, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." Jer. 45. 5. How many distresses were brought upon the children of Israel, by the mixed multitude that went with them? So the swarms of corrupt lusts, earthly affections, and carnal desires, which are found with us, are ever opposing the glory of Jesus, and exciting to seek that happiness, in nature and sense, which can only be found in the spiritual reign of Jesus in the heart.

But so kind and gracious is our dear Saviour, that he crosses our wills and denies our request, when contrary to our spiritual interest. Thus in love he answers our prayers: he withholds what we ask: he gives what he knows is best for us. If disciples ask what is unfit to receive, or unlawful to beg, shall we complain of God's love, if he denies? Granting is not always the effect of love: If so, Paul had been less loved than satan. Satan asked but once concerning Job, and his request was granted. Paul besought the Lord thrice, that the messenger of satan might depart, yet was denied in that. Yea, blessed Jesus thrice prayed his Father, that the cup might pass from him, but that could not be. The Lord delights in the prosperity of his people; therefore he withholds no good thing from them. Not our judgment, but his wisdom must determine this. We pray to be in the height of comfort, and on the pinnacle of joy: But love answers by keeping us in the fast vale of humility, and self-abasement.

I'm heard when answer'd soon or late,
And heard, when I no answer get:

Yea, kindly answer'd when refus'd;
By Jesus lov'd, when harshly us'd.

*The Lord God is my strength, he maketh my feet like
bind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high
places: Hab. 3: 19.*

"The righteous are bold as a lion," Prov. 28. 1. The words of wisdom are not like the pithy sayings of the Heathens, which merely describe states and things to which men never arrive nor enjoy; but they assure us, such and such has been, and is the knowledge and experience of saints in all ages. So children of wisdom are taught their privileges, and their souls are drawn out in prayer and diligence, that they may also partake of the fulness of the blessings described. Whence is the boldness and courage of the righteous derived? See the young stripling David, how boldly he advances to the mighty giant Goliath, with an insignificant weapon in his hand, yet assured of success. For the faith of Omnipotence was in his heart, and these soul-encouraging words in his mouth, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts," 1 Sam. 17: 45.

Faith receives all its courage and strength from its author Jesus. It is armed with Omnipotence; therefore he saith, "All things are possible to him that believeth," Mark 9. 23. So Paul, "I can do all things." Why? because he was a great apostle? No: Prophets and apostles are all of one mind, even with the weakest believer: "It is Christ which strengthens me." "The Lord God is my strength." Are our hearts weak and low, ready to sink and faint? are our graces upon the decline? are our enemies strong, and our troubles increased? To whom should we fly, but to our almighty God and Saviour Jesus? For this very end he makes his dear member's "feet like hind's feet," swift to run from danger, and to fly to him for safety; so also "to run the way of his commandments with great delight."

Such happy souls shall also walk composedly and comfortably upon the high places of comfort and security; above the reach of their implacable foes. Oh, those are sweet seasons, when we mount up with wings as eagles; soar aloft in the exercise of faith; dwell high in the contemplation of love; converse much with Jesus in glory, though on earth in the body. How safe are the people of God! how joyful should they be in faith? how confident in hope? how fervent in love? "For they shall dwell on high; their defence shall be the munition of rocks, their bread shall be given them, and their waters shall be sure," Isa. 33. 16.

Salvation is forever nigh

The souls that fear and trust the Lord,

And grace descending from on high,

Fresh truth and glory shall afford,

I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Micah 7. 9.

Sin, though it be atoned for by the blood of Jesus, and through the faith of this the soul be made holy and happy, yet dwelleth in us: Hence all our griefs, our sufferings, our wretchedness, God's judgments are sometimes secret, always just, ever in love to his own. Misery should never afflict us, if sin did not infect us. A good instrument may be out of tune; the hand of a skilful musician is necessary to set it, and display its harmony and sound. God disciplines by afflictions for our profit and his glory. The faith, patience, and valour of God's soldiers are best known in times of exercise; then how animating to view the love and trust to the faithfulness of a covenant God! to see a father's love to the soul in the rod of his displeasure against sin, how supporting? I will bear the chastisements of my Father—my sins deserve them: Yea, wrath and hell is my desert: My mouth is stopped—I have nothing to plead—guilt silences me.

But see, hear and rejoice, oh soul. The church beholds a blessed person. Who is that HE, she thinks upon and mentions? "Until he pleads my cause." O it is the dear advocate Jesus, the ever precious pleader for poor sinners. How reviving are the sacred pages? they ever testify of the blessed name, and soul-comforting work of Jesus. He never intermits in his plea for the life of the soul. He prevails over the desert of sin by his merits and atonement. Shortly he will speak destruction to all sin by the word of his power.

In the mean time he sends his Spirit the comforter, the third person in the glorious Trinity. "He will bring me forth into the light," saith the church. Here see Old-Testament faith in New-Testament love. It is the Spirit's office to bring souls out of the dark dungeon of nature's sorrows, to see Jesus the light of life. "I shall behold his righteousness." Then it is a day of comfort after a night of distress. Is the righteousness of Jesus mine? am I righteous by that in the sight of God? Then truly it is in righteousness God dealeth with me, and will save me. This faith humbles the soul to the dust, strips it of proud murmurings and self-righteous pleas, and inspires it with boldness at a throne of grace. "For thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble: Destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant."

Pf. 143. 11-12.

Love as brethren. 1 Pet. 3. 8.

Love without reason is a mad passion. Profession without love is but "a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" unmeaning noise to others; unprofitable to him that makes it. Love is of God. It is that precious ointment that is poured forth from the Father of love, upon the head of our spiritual Aaron, and runs down to the skirts of his garment, even upon all his brethren, the children of love. Love descends from God, through Jesus, to us, spreads itself among the brethren, and ascends in grateful odours to the God of love.

The prophet asks, "Have we not all one father?" Mal. 2. 10. "Yes, saith our elder Brother, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." John 20. 17. Hence the Holy Spirit draws the image of Jesus, "the first-born of the many brethren, upon each of their souls; and possesses them with the faith of Jesus. "And whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," 1 John 5. 1. Faith in Jesus is the band and cement of brotherly love. Are we the brethren of Jesus, beloved and chosen by one Father, born again of the same Spirit, partakers of the same grace, heirs of the same promises, travellers to the same kingdom, and shall we not love each other? Alas! alas, we mourn for the loss of health, substance, &c. but what greater cause is there to lament the loss of love amongst God's dear children, Jesus's beloved brethren?

But we are all like Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity: And as with them so anger, and self-will is also found with us, Gen. 49. 5, 6. both are the effect of pride, and are contrary to faith and love. The question is not, are we perfectly freed from every passion and temper contrary to love? Nor are we to expect this from our brethren. God loves us not as sinless, but as he views us in Christ Jesus. Do we really love the children of God as such? love the members of Jesus purely for his sake? Instead of indulging, do we curb and resist, watch and pray against our tempers, which are contrary to love? This is a blessed evidence, the root of love is in us. Let us be importunate with Jesus, that the fruits may abound to the glory of God, "whom we love, because he first loved us."

Love lays her own advantage by
To seek her neighbour's good:
So God's own Son came down to die,
And bought our lives with blood.

Love is the grace that keeps her pow'r
In all the realms above;
There faith and hope are known no more,
But saints forever love.

Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. Psal. 38. 4.

Those who think lightly of sin, and account iniquity a trifling thing, evidently show, that the God of this world hath blinded their eyes to the infinite atonement of Jesus, and hardened their hearts through the deceitfulness of sin; therefore they are insensible of grief, and without feeling of godly sorrow for sin. When Jesus is known in the heart, sin is truly abhorred; forsaken, and overcome. But it is most distressing to the regenerate soul, when the load of guilt, and the burden of sin are suffered to lie, day after day, upon the conscience: the insupportable agony of such a state, none know but those who have experienced it. One would ask, Is not this contradictory to that comforting assertion, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus?" Rom. 8. 1. inconsistent with that triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Rom. 8. 33. No, for though charge and condemnation for sin may be brought by Satan, the accuser of the brethren: the law may accuse, and condemn, and our own spirits must confess we are sinners; yet our covenant God hath laid all our iniquities upon Jesus; and this is the full and true charter of his covenant concerning his children, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Jesus is the only balm in Gilead, the only physician for sin-distressed, sore burdened, heavy laden souls. We may seek rest, but all in vain, from any other object. Nothing can quiet and relieve the distressed soul but this one truth, Jesus hath bore, Jesus hath fully suffered, Jesus hath perfectly atoned for all the sins of his people. So that the Lord has discharged all their sins, and will remember no sin, no not one sin against them. O when one beholds this general release, every debt crossed by Jesus's blood, and God acquitting from every accusation of law and conscience, then our souls return to their rest. This is the faith of God's elect. So the Spirit bears witness to Jesus. So he is glorified and delighted in as the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. And while our hearts are kept simple, loving, faithful to him, we live upon his grace, and feast upon his love; and holy longings inspire our hearts, that we may fully enjoy him in glory, when

Sin (my worst enemy before)
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more:
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again.

Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desir'd and wish'd below;
And ev'ry pow'r find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.

Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Gen. 3. 1.

It is the grand master-piece of that wisdom, which is earthly, sensual, devilish, to call in question the truth of God's word: to insinuate a doubt about it. But here appears more modesty even in satan, than in some of his servants; for he only puts a quere upon it, whereas they absolutely deny and ridicule the truths of Jehovah. In the same way that the old serpent attacked and prevailed against the innocence of our first parents, he still persists to attempt to destroy the comforts and oppose the holiness of God's children by artful suggestions against the truth of God's word. If he can but raise a doubt in our minds concerning what the Lord hath spoken, he strikes at the very foundation of our faith, hope, love and obedience. As he abode not in the truth, he is a restless implacable enemy to the truth, and every soul who embraces the truth as in Jesus.

Really one finds satan like a laborious domestick chaplain, preaching in season, and out of season in one's ears: "Hath the Lord spoken this? hath he forbidden that? how can this doctrine be true? it is contrary to reason, inconsistent with the nature of things; you a child of God? you a believer in Jesus? your sins aton'd for by Jesus? your soul clothed with his righteousness and sanctified by his spirit? Is not everlasting love meer imagination? electing grace, the creature of fancy? the safety and perseverance of the saints of Jesus, the whim of a heated brain? is Jesus the essentially true God? hath the Lord spoken so much against sin? doth he require so much strictness of life and holiness in walk, as is contrary to the rest of the world and exposes to their hatred and contempt?"

Thus with art and sophistry, he insinuates and puts on the air of a candid disputant for truth. What did Eve get by listening to him, and conversing with him? rather, what did she not lose? even the life, the love, the joy, the peace of her soul. It is our wisdom, not to parly with or study to answer satan's suggestions, but instantly to "resist him stedfast in the faith" 1 Pet. 5. 9. taking the sword of the spirit, the word of God, wherein is contained, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: "For all scripture is given by inspiration of God, being able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 3. 15.

And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things were filled with wrath. Luke 4. 28.

Human nature, how low fallen in misery and wretchedness! yet how high doth it rise in pride! Though the meek Lamb of God is the preacher of sovereign grace and distinguishing love, yet the wrath of man dares to exalt itself against his doctrine. Fury burst forth like fire, vengeance and resentment break the bounds of the law of God and man, and would have instantly put Jesus to death.

Pride is the first-born of Lucifer: "Ye shall be as gods," hath tainted our whole nature with the cursed leaven, and will be the last enemy that is destroyed in us. Out of the abundance of pride in the heart the mouth is opened, against God's sovereign grace, discriminating love, and divine dispensations. "Be still, and know that I am God," is a lesson the proud nature of man is averse to. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy," Exod. 33. 19. though spoke from the mouth of the Lord, yet the hearts of sinners rise in wrath against it: They look with an evil eye upon the good pleasure of the Lord; and dare challenge and call in question his truths, his dealings with the children of men.

Disciple, this day, a real likeness, a true picture of thy proud nature is presented to thy view. Behold thyself in thy proud brethren; see thy natural aversion to the truths of God, and thy Saviour's preaching. All these worshipping Jews, priests as well as people, conceived wrath even in God's house; yea, their teeming hearts were soon filled with it against Jesus, a man who had told them the truth. The history of the Sereptan widow, and Naaman the Assyrian, they were well acquainted with, but could not bear the doctrine of it. Good Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, 2 Chron. 32. 26. do we not feel the stirrings of it also? Oh what cause, what daily cause for his practice. Stout words proceed from unhumiliated hearts. When our voices are heard on high against God's determinations, it is a sad proof that our hearts are not laid low with a sight and sense of being guilty before God. Those who challenge God's purposes, have some plea founded upon imaginary goodness in themselves. "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," 1 Pet. 5. 5.

Shall man reply against the Lord,
And call his Maker's ways unjust?
The thunder of his dreadful word
Can crush a thousand worlds to dust.

But, O my soul, if truth so bright
Should dazzle and confound thy sight,
Yet shall his written will obey,
And wait the great decisive day.

Search me O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Pf. 139. 23, 24.

“He that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.” John 3. 21. This is an infallible touchstone of true conversion, given by the Oracle of truth himself. “He that trusteth to his own heart, is a fool,” saith wisdom, Prov. 28. 26. Sincerity may be attended with diffidence. Sincere upright souls know they have to do with a heart-searching God: To him they appeal, and desire to be searched and tried by him. What avails the soul, to obtain a favourable opinion from our fellow vain mortals, if we are conscious all is not right within? What peace, what comfort, what joy, though men approve, and the soul itself be ever so confident, while conscience testifies, my ways do not please the Lord, my walk is contrary to his will. True love to Jesus excites godly jealousy in the heart.

While in the flesh, we are ever exposed to deceits from a subtle foe, a deceitful heart, and an ensnaring world, yea and from false teachers also. Intricate paths may present—darkness may overtake—and Satan may thrust sore at the soul, that it may fall, or be driven into by-ways of error and wickedness. Here is the wisdom and patience of saints, when they cannot see their way, to cry to their guide. Jesus is the way—the only way—the way everlasting; in which the saints in all ages walked to glory. Faith in Jesus is inconsistent with every wicked way. Though in our present state, there is no entire freedom from sin, which dwelleth in us; consequently no perfection in righteousness performed by us: Yet, the more we abide in Jesus, the closer we cleave to him, the more stedfastly we behold him, so much the more, through the grace of the holy Spirit, are we dead to sin, and alive to holiness. We experience the ways of wisdom to be “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be paths of peace.” Prov. 3. 17.

This is the end of simple-hearted, sincere souls, in their appeals at a throne of grace, that “with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor. 3. 18.

His Spirit purifies our frame, Jesus and his salvation came
And seals our peace with God; By water and by blood.

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. John 8. 31.

As there is a mutual love subsisting between Jesus and his believing members; so there is a mutual choice of each other: hence saith the church, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." Cant. 6. 3. so also there is a mutual inhabitation, every believer dwells in Christ and Christ in him: this matter is only comfortably experienced by continuing in the truth: for, "whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son." 2 John 9.

Jesus hath many who profess to be his disciples in name, fewer in deed. But what profit is this? if souls have not been sick of sin, alas, Jesus will be a physician of no value to them; if they have not seen themselves lost, their state accursed, and their case hopeless and desperate, so that none but Jesus can restore and save them; they will but lightly esteem the Saviour. However precious Jesus is, to others, he will be but little regarded by them; they may profess his word, but will not continue long, they will only follow him for a season. Ah, poor souls, how soon are they offended, little things put them to a stand, trifles turn them back, temptations and trials prove what they were, other objects engage their affections and they presently fall quite away, and and follow the Lamb no more. Continuance in the truth, is the touchstone of faith: thus only is it evidenced. Disciple, remember, "If thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation," Eccles. 2. 1. so surely as thou art a disciple in deed and in truth, thou must become a crucified servant of a crucified Lord. As thou hopest for the comforts of faith, so expect the trials of faith, and the exercise of patience. Thou must abide the tribulations of Jesus's word, as well as its consolations. The master deceives none. He tells us what we are to expect; every thing grievous to flesh and blood. But blessed be his gracious name and precious love, he hath bid us "Fear not," and hath given us the most comfortable assurances, "I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, [of affliction] I will be with thee; and through the rivers, [deep and overwhelming distress] they shall not overthrow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, [fiery darts of satan, hot temptations within, and burning malice of men without] thou shalt not be burnt; [like the burning bush, thou shalt not be consumed] neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Thou shalt be fire proof) Why all this safety in the midst of such danger? Most joyful reason! "For I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour." Isa. 43. 1, 2, 3.

Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Jer. 17. 5.

It is very remarkable, after the prophet pronounces the curse of confiding in the flesh, and the blessedness of trusting in the Lord; he adds, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," ver. 9. Hence we may infer, that the poison of pride, vain confidence in the flesh, and self-righteous hopes, may lurk under the most exalted pretensions to piety, holiness, and perfection. This matter calls for great care and circumspection.

"As many as are of the works of the law, (who in anywise seek to be made righteous by doing) are under the curse." Gal. 3. 10. Think not this contrary to the holiness of God to pronounce such to be cursed, as though the Lord did not hate sin, and love and approve true holiness. No: but such deceive their own souls, flatter themselves in their own sight. They dishonour the perfection of God's law, by bringing down its purity and spirituality to a level with their own works and obedience: they reject the righteousness of Jesus, deny the faith of him, look to their own holiness, trust in themselves; they are righteous, confide in the power of the flesh, and so their hearts depart from the Lord: Pride and self-exalting is at the bottom. As they appeal to the law, they must go to the law, and hear its sentence, which sounds nothing but curse, and wrath, and hell.

Glory to Jesus, he hath sustained all its dreadful penalties, he hath fulfilled all its righteous demands. By the faith of this, his members trust in his righteousness only, and rejoice in him alone, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Those are precious evangelical words of Luther: "So we teach and comfort the afflicted sinner. Brother, it is not possible for thee to become so righteous as to feel no sin at all. In that thou dost feel and acknowledge it, it is a good token; give thanks to God. Christ healeth them that are broken in heart, and saveth sinners. Follow not the judgment of reason, which telleth thee, Christ is angry with sinners; but kill reason and believe in Christ, and the sin which remaineth in thee, is pardoned for Christ's sake, in whom thou believest, whose righteousness is thy righteousness; and thy sin is his sin. Every Christian is an high-priest. This is the daily sacrifice of the New Testament, which must be offered up. The evening sacrifice is to kill reason: the morning sacrifice is to glorify God." On Gal. 3. 6. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Jer. 17. 7.

Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. Heb. 13: 13.

The profession of Jesus is easy to nature. There is nothing irksome to the flesh in being called a christian. But to know Jesus in heart, to confess him with the tongue, and to follow him in our life, will ever expose us to reproach and contempt: but if with Philip we have really found that blessed HIM of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth; we must, we shall speak of him to others, we shall esteem Jesus our beloved and our treasure, and our hearts and affections will be going out after him. Moses choice will be ours: "We shall with him esteem the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." But fleshly wisdom is contrary to all this; that ever prompts, "Save thyself, take care of thy good name, fear, lest that be cast out as evil; beware of thy character, go not too far, thou wilt sustain damage: In the camp of this world, riches, pleasures and honours are enjoyed; study the happy mien, thou mayst hold with the world, and yet not quit Jesus?" nay, but thou canst not love and serve two such contrary masters; thou wilt soon grow tired of one or the other. The inward glory and peace of Jesus, will not, cannot be enjoyed, but while the heart and affections are placed on him. The faith of Jesus is contrary to the world, it cannot be reconciled to its vain customs and sinful maxims. Nay, faith is the victory that overcometh the world. The world is an enemy's camp: a despised Nazarene is the christian's glory.

The heaven-born soul, though like a captive imprisond in flesh, yet hath free access to Jesus by faith. So it endures present reproaches seeing him that is invisible. And do we hope for future sight, and eternal fruition of him who endured the cross and despised the shame for us? Let us take and bear his cross; despised disciples let us be. Look down on the world with contempt; look up to Christ with joy: go forth to meet him in love, O soul. Remember, ever bear on thy mind, Jesus went forth cheerfully to meet all his conflicts and agonies for us, yet a little while and thou shalt go forth from the body, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord," 1 Thess. 4: 17.

When I can read my title clear

To mansions in the skies,

I bid farewell to every fear,

And wipe my weeping eyes,

Should earth against my soul engage,

And hellish darts be hurl'd,

Then I can smile at Satan's rage,

And face a frowning world.

glorify God. On Gal. 3: 6. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whole hope the Lord is." Jer. 17: 7.

For his anger endureth but a moment: in his favour is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Ps. 30. 5.

Surely here is a glorious assemblage of comforting truths, like a reviving cordial of rich compounds to enliven drooping spirits; too too often do God's children judge of their Father's love, from corrupt ideas, through the carnality of their natures—the depravity of their judgment—the weakness of their faith—the uncertainty of their frames and feelings, and the artful insinuations of satan. Their loving Father is considered as an implacable being, full of wrath and anger against them. But this is contrary to God's revelation of himself in Christ Jesus as a God of love. So also is it injurious and hurtful to the souls of the faithful; for it damps their love, distresses their spirits, deadens the exercise of their graces, and hinders their increase in holiness; the essence of which is founded in the love of God. Therefore such views come not from God. But thus satan gains an advantage, and triumphs over poor souls, with There, there, so would I have it."

What can the soul do? whither can he fly? what course can he take? all legal efforts are vain—creature acts ineffectual—from self and nature no hope can spring. What can he think? Truly stand amazed that he is out of hell. He cannot sink lower in his views of himself, than what are his just deserts; but never so miserable can he be in his own sight, but the grace of God in Christ Jesus is all-sufficient to afford hope and help. In nature's despair, grace triumphs: A sense of momentary anger, heightens returning favour: the joy of the morning is improved by a past night of sorrow: God ever rests unchangeable in his love to his people. This is the essence of gospel-grace and truth. That we vary and fluctuate in our apprehension of his love, is natural to our very existence, as old and new creatures. "But we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. 1. 19. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rev. 19. 10.

How will the powers of darkness boast
If but one praying soul be lost?
But I have trusted in thy grace,
And shall again behold thy face.

Whate'er my fears or foes suggest,
Thou art my hope, my joy, my rest;
My heart shall feel thy love, and raise
My cheerful voice to songs of praise.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Psal. 46. 2.

In times of dejection and distress, the thoughts of a dear friend, who has comforted us in times past, tend to alleviate the mind. If we are assured of his love to us, we question not his readiness, to assist us. So under the affecting loss of a dear brother, Martha addresses the Saviour, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." John 11. 21.

Inexpressible blessedness, to live in a holy familiarity with the God of love. How simple are David's words! how freely doth he pour out his complaints, and tell God of his sorrows! though his soul was bowed down within him, heaviness of mind beset him, the sweet sun-shine of joy was overcast by the dark cloud of sorrow, yet faith's piercing eye looks through all. Regardless of his own frames and feelings, he has direct recourse to God.

O MY God. How sweet, how animating are appropriating views to the soul! Though cast down, though dejected in self, and all within heightens the gloom; yet all above is hopeful and encouraging. Though no confidence about us, yet Jesus is before the throne for us. "I will not, I cannot, I dare not forget this. Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; I will still remember my God; my thoughts shall be yet towards him; my hopes in him; my expectations from him. Though it is now dark, I will remember past times of light and love. Though now bowed down, yet my God has been the lifter-up of my head. The light of his reconciled face in Jesus hath shined upon me. Clouds may intercept my joyful views of this, but not prevent his sight of me, nor turn away his love from me. My case is before him; my soul lies open to his view; the times of refreshing shall come from his presence. He rests in his love." Such are the reasonings of faith. departed saints experience, should encourage living saints confidence. Cast down mourning souls when they enjoy not God's comforts, should meditate on his loving purposes, rich promises and and free grace in Christ Jesus; holding fast by the word of his truth, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. 1. 9.

Amidst temptations sharp and long

My soul to this dear refuge flies.

Hope is my anchor firm and strong

While tempest blow and billows rise.

The gospel bears my spirit up;

A faithful and unchanging God

Lays the foundation for my hope

In oaths and promises and blood.

Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.
John 17. 17.

Thus prayed our great High-Priest on earth. What he asked in his humiliation, is founded upon the word and will of his Father; and he hath power to effect in his exaltation. Hence we have the fullest assurance of the perfect sanctification of all his members. Hence the desires and breathings of souls after holiness, are encouraged; and the prayers of the faithful gather the strongest confidence of success.

While our Beloved expresses his affectionate concern for his people's salvation, we see an equal regard for the honour and glory of his Father's word. Love for holiness, and love of the truth are inseparable. As the gospel prevails in the heart, holiness is increased. It is first life, then liveliness in the soul: It is the ministration of the Spirit, in the sanctification of the Spirit. Whatever working we find of the Spirit in the heart, it is by the word of truth. The life of believers is from Christ; therefore increasing light—refreshing comforts—stronger affections shall abound, and all by that same law of grace and truth, whereby the soul is converted to God by the faith of Jesus. "The law of the Lord is perfect—converting the soul—making wise the simple—rejoicing the heart—enlightening the eyes," Ps. 19. 7, 8.

There is a peculiar glory in the order of salvation, "God hath chosen us from the beginning, (before the foundation of the world) to Salvation." But how is this made manifest? only "through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. 2. 13. Thus faith and holiness flow from electing love. So every word of God's truth is prized; and the fulfilment of every promise is expected. We love the truth, because it discovers God's most ancient love to us in Christ: It reveals Christ's righteousness to us for our justification; revives our hearts with the knowledge of pardon by his blood, and the certainty of full sanctification and perfect glory which shall be enjoyed. So Jesus prayed—so we believe—so poor sinners are saved. Saved, unspeakable mercy! saved from the power of sin, and the prevalence of pride. Happy the heart, where the love of holiness prevails agreeable to the word of truth. Dreadful delusion! when the truth is held in unrighteousness; or zeal for holiness is contended for, while the truths of electing love; Christ's righteousness; his member's certain salvation are opposed and denied. Glory to the Father for his everlasting love. Glory to Jesus for his justifying Righteousness, as well as for his atoning blood. Glory to the Spirit for his sanctifying influences, will ever be the ascription of truly sanctified hearts. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Matt. 19. 6.

Whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple. Luke 14. 33.

"Marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again," ſaith Chriſt, John 3. 7. for the bleſſed effects of this ſpiritual birth will be evident; Jeſus will be choſen as our beloved maſter and only hope. He being eſteemed as our treaſure, our hearts will be with him, our affections towards him, and it will be our chiefſt delight to hear his voice, and to follow him in the regeneration. Coming to Chriſt, is turning our backs upon the "luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, and the pride of life." By the faith of Jeſus we renounce and forſake all theſe things as our curſe and ſhame. The clearer views we have of Chriſt's glory, and the ſtronger our faith is in him, ſo much the more we become dead to all things beſide him. We have need to pray daily, Sun of righteouſneſs, ſhine brighter on our minds! Lord, increaſe our faith! For the fleſh, with its affections and luſts, ſtill abide with us; and as the life of Jeſus increaſeth, through faith in the heart, ſo ſhall we more and more groan under whatever is contrary thereto. The victory is obtained only through faith; in its nature very ſimple, but in its fruits and effects moſt comprehensive; for hereby we enjoy more happineſs and comfort in Chriſt, than all that this preſent world can give us. Ye ſons of earth, ye diſdain us; we pity you. As ye are now, ſo once were we. We have enjoyed your carnal gratifications, and feaſted on your vain delights, too too long; we confeſs it, and grieve for it. Now we have found Jeſus. We have another and a better life. In divine pleaſures, ſpiritual joys from him, and ſweet communion with him, we anticipate future glory. We enjoy a heaven of comfort in a world of ſorrow. Therefore, in forſaking all, and following Jeſus, though painful and grievous to the life of the fleſh, yet it is conſolation and joy to the life of our ſouls.

Experience will ever prove, he who is the moſt faithful, will be the moſt comfortable diſciple. He who lives neareſt Chriſt in faith, will follow him cloſeſt in love; and conſequently keep at the greateſt diſtance from the world's vain pleaſures, and the carnal delights of the fleſh. "If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die; but if ye, through the ſpirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live," Rom. 8. 13.

Miſtaken ſouls! that dream of heav'n,
And make their empty boaſt
Of inward joys and ſins forgiv'n
While they are ſlaves of leiſt!

Faith muſt obey their Father's will,
As well as truſt his grace;
A pard'ning God is jealous ſtill
For his own holineſs.

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Tim. 2. 6.

The gospel is quite sufficient to answer every objection, and to silence every cavil against salvation by Christ. This sacred oracle we are to consult day after day. Do we ask, why are any sinners saved? it assures us God hath loved them; this is the cause. If we enquire, how doth God save them? it tells us, it is in a way of strict justice, consistent with the honour of God's law, the perfection of his righteousness, holiness and truth: therefore redemption is by stipulated price, the blood of the covenant, the precious blood of Christ as a Lamb, without spot. Do we seek to know who are the redeemed of the Lord? Jesus assures us he gave his life a ransom for many, Matt. 20. 28. even for ALL which the Father hath given him.

The word of God mentions no one in particular, but sets forth salvation in general and extensive terms; it is exactly suited to the most vile and accursed state of sinners; it is perfectly sufficient to relieve the mind, encourage hope, forbid despair, under a sense of the most complicated sins and accumulated guilt of lost, wretched and undone souls.

The ransom of Jesus is sufficient, is all-sufficient; the price he paid for our redemption is fully equivalent, to satisfy for all our transgressions, and to answer every demand of law and justice. To this very end Christ gave himself. So is he testified of in the gospel of grace. Which also explicitly answers this essential and important enquiry: Have I redemption in the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of my sins? "He that believeth shall be saved"—"he is justified from all things;" the Holy Ghost testifies to this truth, in the word; and where this is received, and believed in the heart, the same spirit also bears witness to it with our spirits: and the faith of God's elect is evidenced, by bringing forth the fruits of the spirit.

There is a time, a due time, when Christ shall be so testified of to the souls of all God's children. The ransom-price being paid, he will set the captives free, and "say to the prisoners, go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways [of light and truth]; and their pastures shall be in all high places, [even the mountains of consolation, and the hills of joy]. They shall not hunger nor thirst [after any other hope but Jesus]: neither shall the heat, nor the sun smite them; [trials and afflictions shall profit them;] he that hath mercy upon them shall lead them: [they shall not be left to walk in their own crooked ways]: but by the springs of water, [of refreshment and holiness] shall he guide them," Isa. 49. 9, 10.

And Jesus said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, &c. Luke 11. 2.

Faith in the heart exciteth prayer from the lips. So the faith of God's elect manifests itself: It cometh from the Lord the spirit; by it the soul is led to Jesus the mediator; and by him to God the Father: So each person in the Godhead is known, worshipped and glorified by believing souls. While we see and feel nothing of our misery and wants, no marvel prayer is an irksome task. From a sight of ourselves, and the knowledge of Jesus, we shall come to him daily with simplicity of heart, Master, teach us to pray! It is the highest honour, the sweetest privilege, the most blessed exercise of the soul to draw nigh to God. What greater on earth than to come to the throne of the King of kings? And that fear and shame may not beset and keep thee back, knowing thy vile nature and sinful practice, hear thy Lord and Saviour's encouraging direction, "When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c."

And can it be, that I, a child of wrath by nature, a son of perdition by sin, a vassal and slave of satan, and accursed by the holy law; can it be that God will own me, hear me, bless me as his child? Yes; grace triumphs over nature's deserts; love glories over creature's demerits. The lips of truth have said it, and who shall dare reverse it. By the sword of the spirit slay the unbelief of thy heart. What Jesus hath taught his disciples to call God, that he is to them. As Jesus is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe; so God is the universal parent of all; but in an especial manner, the father of all the dear members of his beloved Son. A father by covenant love—by election of grace—by promise—by strict justice—a father in holiness and truth, because of the suretyship of Jesus—the righteousness of Jesus—the atonement of Jesus—the holiness of Jesus: And the weakest, feeblest member in the faith of Christ, possesseth Jesus, with all his blessings, as man and mediator.

So the Father loveth them with complacency and delight; so children's hearts should continually be drawn out to the Father in holy affection, fervent desires, and humble confidence; nothing doubting; but gathering all confidence of hope, as being taught by Jesus, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Eph. 3. 12.

Lord, I address thy heav'nly throne,
Call me a child of thine;
Send down the spirit of thy Son,
To form my soul divine;

There shed thy choicest loves abroad,
And make my comforts strong;
Then shall I say, My father, God,
With an unwar'ring tongue.

Ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Heb. 10. 36.

Are the christian's exercises great, and his patience small? But can he ever be at a loss to know by whom this grace is increased? Verily the Lord he serveth is "the God of patience." Rom. 15. 5. Hath he need of patience? Hear the Comforter's declaration, by St. Paul, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory." Mind, disciple, this is covenant mercy; therefore, with every other grace, it comes through a Mediator: Hence it is added, "By Jesus Christ." Phil. 4. 19. "We do the will of God, when we believe on the name of his Son Jesus, and love one another." 1 John 3. 23. "And all the promises are in Christ Jesus yea and amen," sure and certain to every believing soul. "By faith we have the earnest of eternal life." "Having received the first fruits, the harvest shall follow in due season." But there are many conflicts to be engaged in, a great fight of afflictions to be endured on earth, before we shall be crowned in glory; therefore, patience is necessary. Patience must have its perfect work: By faith we stand—by patience we endure. Believing, we look forward in hope; this brings patience in sufferings.

But Satan has a very poignant dart, which he dared to cast at Jesus; no marvel that he shoots it against us also—"If thou be the Son of God," why doth thy loving Father suffer such distress and affliction to fall on thee? Faith can answer. All is my Father's will, from his love to his glory; and it shall be for the good and profit of my soul. I cannot doubt his love—I dare not murmur against his dispensations—I desire patience under all—I will not cast away my confidence—time is short—sufferings are but for a moment—eternity is near—afflictions are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith." Heb. 10. 37.

'Tis God that lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them to the grave;
He gives, and (blessed be his name)
He takes but what he gave.

If smiling mercy crown our lives,
Its praises shall be spread;
And we'll adore the justice too
That strikes our comforts dead.

He that believeth on him is not condemned. John
3. 8.

Dost thou believe on the Son of God? is the most important question in the world. Faith in Jesus is the "one thing needful." Without this, the day of life is a state of sin and condemnation. The night of death is full of terror; and the day of judgment most dreadful. It cannot be otherwise, as we are all malefactors, under the sentence of the law; the thoughts of execution must be most alarming. But, as we say, 'What the eye doth not see, the heart doth not rue.' Sin naturally blinds men's eyes, hardens their hearts; and vain self-righteous hopes deceive their souls into an insensibility of their undone state.

What a special mercy to know one-self! what distinguishing grace to know Jesus! what peculiar favour to know one is delivered from condemnation by him! This is the joyful privilege of every believer. This is his happy state; though the law condemn him as a transgressor, yet God doth not impute sin, but imputeth righteousness unto him; a righteousness which is equivalent to every demand of the law; even the perfect righteousness of the ever blessed man and mediator Jesus, our brother in the flesh. Therefore he is not condemned.

Sin cannot condemn him; it is all atoned for by the blood of Jesus. The law cannot condemn him; that is satisfied: yea more, it is magnified and made honourable; more so by the obedience of the God-man Jesus, than it could have been by all the obedience of a world of innocent spotless saints, or of the whole company of the heavenly host of angels and arch-angels. The justice of God cannot condemn him: For what charge can the strictest justice bring against a righteous person? God's faithfulness and truth cannot condemn, they are engaged in the behalf of the righteous. "God is faithful and just to forgive us;" and his love and mercy embraceth such on every side; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.

Lo, thus is the man blessed that believeth in Jesus: Righteous in Christ, through faith; yet not faith, but Jesus is his righteousness—his wisdom—his sanctification—his redemption. By faith he ever glories in Jesus as his all in all. He that thus abides in Jesus, enjoys peace in his soul, and brings forth fruit to the glory of God; he is an heir of "the inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in Jesus." Acts 26. 18.

The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion. Prov. 28. 1.

WATCHFUL and BOLD, is the christian's motto. Watchful, to avoid sin; bold, to resist the enemies of his soul. For he is engaged in a righteous cause, animated by righteous hopes, made righteous by a righteous Lord; from whom also he derives all his strength and courage. "In Jehovah [Jesus] have I righteousness and strength." Isa. 45. 22. This is the glorying of his soul. Not his own inherent strength, not his own personal faithfulness and righteousness, is the cause of his fortitude; but the arm of Jehovah is his shield, and the righteousness, the perfect righteousness of Jesus, is his defence against the face of every enemy; the conscience being cleansed from guilt by the blood of Jesus, and cloathed with his righteousness by faith, the soul experiences a holy boldness at a throne of grace—appeals against the fury of the enemy and oppressor—and finds supplies of strength in every time of need. This is the life of faith. So believers grow strong, (not from conceit of what they are in themselves, but) "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Thus righteousness inspires with courage and boldness. Such is the comfort of faithful souls. All the glory is due to Jesus, through whom the spirit of love, power, and of a sound mind, is given unto his righteous children. The action of Joseph, of Arimathea, is recorded with an emphasis upon his courage: "He went in boldly to Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus." Mark 15. 43. Here was boldness in the midst of danger—an act of faith, in the face of foes—a token of love, without fear or shame of the greatest enemies and opposers to Jesus. But it is said, "he was waiting for the kingdom of God."

"The boldness of Peter and John astonished the Jewish sanhedrim, who took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4. 13. And have we been with Jesus, in the faith of our souls? Are we waiting for the coming of his kingdom? Shall we be afraid of the worms of the earth? ashamed of our Master, his cross, or his ways? Forbid it, Lord! inspire, blessed Spirit, our souls with boldness, that with David we may triumph, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, mine heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Psalm 17. 1, 3.

But Christ as a son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Heb. 3. 6.

The tabernacle, with all its furniture, the ark of the covenant, the institutions of sacrifices, &c. were appointed by Jehovah, to show his people the nature of his house, to typify God's dwelling in the human nature of Jesus, his sacrifice for and special presence with the household of faith. David asks, Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Psal. 15. 1. The answer is, only those who are furnish'd with the graces of Jesus, and whose lives evidence it.

It bespeaks a person's propriety over, and delight of residence in a house, when he adorns and furnishes it: so doth Jesus, by the hearts of his beloved members; he is our brother in the flesh; he complies with his own command, When thou lettest a servant go free, "thou shalt furnish him liberally." Deut. 15. 14. Out of the fulness of Jesus, most liberally, his members receive grace for grace: hence they have the confidence of faith, the rejoicing of hope.

But doth the apostle put an IF here, to weaken their confidence and damp their joy, as though Jesus was not faithful to them? or that their own efforts, could make salvation more secure than his blood and righteousness hath? or to keep them always in a state of diffidence and uncertainty? Far from it; this would counter-act the grace of Jesus, weaken faith and hope in him, and strengthen the pride and vain glory of the sinner, as though Jesus, was the foundation, but our own arm, our own faithfulness was to raise the superstructure, and bring forth the head-stone of salvation with shoutings, not of grace, grace to him; but glory, glory to us. Most detestable thought!

We are assured that all those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, shall enter into his glory, Rev. 21. 27. there are no ifs nor doubt of this. But who is of that happy number this we can only know by the spirit given unto us; whereby we cleave unto Jesus in heart and affection as our only hope, renounce both the righteousness and sinfulness of the flesh, and continue to persevere in the faith of the gospel, "and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." Eph. 4. 1. "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. Isa. 8. 13.

In consequence of a blessed union between Jesus and his believing members, the word discovers the sweet concord and delight that mutually subsists in the heart, each to other. Thus of old it is declared, "The Lord's portion is his people." Deut. 32. 9. And the church claims Jesus under the same appellation: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." Lam. 3. 24. "Ye shall be to me a holy nation." Exod. 19. 6. "I will dwell in them, and walk in them," saith our gracious Immanuel. Therefore, such eminently distinguished highly favoured souls are called to the most special and peculiar service on earth, ere they attain the perfect enjoyment of Jesus in glory. What more exalted pitch of honor, than for creatures of a day to sanctify the Lord, the Lord of the heavenly hosts, the Lord of the armies of the whole earth?

Is Jesus the Lord thy God? worship thou him; give him the glory due unto his name. The heart is his temple; there sanctify the Lord. Separate every idol of self-righteousness, every vain pretension to thine own holiness, every boasted plea for mercy, but what is in Jesus, and flows through him. Spurn from thee all things else, as detestable things, that would rival Jesus, detract from his glory, and cast a veil over his finished salvation, by the life of his obedience, and the blood of his atonement.

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," Phil. 4. 4. but rejoice with trembling; for the Lord our God is a holy God. Fear his frown. Dread his displeasure. Stand in awe of his majesty daily. The righteousness, the peace, the joy of the soul is from him: Therefore the heart should be ever towards him—the eye looking up to him—the affections placed upon him—the hands labouring to work those things which are well-pleasing in his sight—and the feet running the way of his commandments with delight. But, who is sufficient for these things? For, from daily experience, we are constrained to confess, "when I would do good, evil is present with me:" This is humbling, but not discouraging. Thy Master knows thy compound state—the desire to good is from him—the evil from thyself. Inspired Paul is upon a level with the weakest believer, alike naturally prone to evil, destitute of inherent power; but yet saith he, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Phil. 4. 13. This is the daily exercise of faith, to oppose Christ's righteousness to the feeling of sin, the sanctification of the spirit to every lust, the strength of Jehovah to the weakness of nature. For this is the hope, the joy, the triumph of every believer, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isa. 44. 5, 24.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. 1 Pet. 2. 11.

The soul of every disciple of Jesus is dearly beloved by the holy Trinity: It is a precious jewel in the eyes of the loving Father, the redeeming Son, and the sanctifying Spirit; who all unite to make it happy. But it hath a world of enemies. Yea, it is at present in the closest and nearest relation to one of its greatest foes, the flesh; the lusts and desires of which are at continual war against the spiritual peace, comfort and welfare of the soul. Therefore, O christian, thy best friend sounds an alarm of love, gives thee a dehortation of kindness: "Abstain from fleshly lusts." He knows what hurt compliance with and indulgence in them will do thee; thou wilt surely feel it, and be sorely grieved for it. Destroy thee, they shall not; but distress thee, like the prevailings of a bitter enemy they will. Consider, beloved christians, we are strangers and pilgrims, sojourning and passing through a strange land and foreign country; our clothing is, Christ and his righteousness; our food, Christ and his fulness; our staff, is Christ and his promises; our guide, is the Spirit of Christ; the place whither we are bound, is heaven, the better country, our father's house, the inheritance of our friends and brethren.

Settle this in your minds. Meditate daily on your calling, your hope, your heaven; there is your treasure. Where should your affections and delight be? Not on earth, this is not your rest, it is polluted; not in the flesh, this is to be denied, and its motions abstained from, its lusts and affections crucified daily. Know the flesh as thine enemy, treat it as such, keep it under; in it "dwells no good thing;" its lustings and desires cannot but be evil continually; they will never cease to oppose the Spirit, the life and liberty of thy soul; they are ever at war against the peace, consolation, and joy, which is in Christ Jesus. Daily victory, is joyful triumph.

This life's a dream, an empty show;

But the bright world, to which I go,

Hath joys substantial and sincere:

When shall I wake and find me there?

O glorious hour! O blest abode!

I shall be near and like my God;

And flesh and sin no more controul

The sacred pleasures of the soul.

My flesh shall slumber in the ground

Till the last trumpet's joyful sound;

Then burst the chains, with sweet sur-

And in my Saviour's image rise. [prize]

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Psalm 19. 12, 13.

As faith gives a holy boldness at the throne of grace; so the regenerate soul is open and ingenuous in confession of sin. Its errors are its concern; the most secret faults bow it in humility before the Lamb. To his precious blood the believer has recourse for cleansing; he has daily need of it. Though he can't understand all his errors, though many secret faults cleave unto him, yet he is made sensible even these must be washed away, lest they defile the conscience, and spread a cloud over the mind. It is the peculiar wisdom of disciples, not only to observe the bud, blossom and fruit of sin; but also to consider the evil root, the polluted nature from which it springs. Here is the exercise of watchfulness. This calls for their daily prayer to be kept by the power of God.

Happy souls! who, under a sense of peace through the blood of Jesus, are daily praying to be kept by the grace of the Spirit. Such truly know themselves—see their danger of falling—will not, dare not endeavour to palliate or lessen the odious nature, and hateful deformity of their sin. They will not give a softer name to sin than it deserves, lest they depreciate the value of that precious blood which Jesus shed to atone its guilt; nor flatter themselves into a deceitful notion, that they are perfect, and have no sin in them. The Spirit of truth delivers them from such errors—he teacheth them as poor sinners to look to the Saviour, and to beseech him to keep back their head-strong passions, the unruly lusts, and evil concupiscences which dwell in their sinful natures. Alas! the most exalted saint, the most established believer, if left to himself, how soon might the blackest crimes, the most presumptuous sins, get the dominion over him? David had woeful experience of this for a season. He prays from a heart-felt sense of past misery and future danger; but he found the blessing of that covenant promise: O believer, may it be the exercise of thy faith daily to live upon it, daily to plead it before thy Saviour. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6. 14.

O who can ever find
The errors of his ways?
Yet with a bold presumptuous mind
I would not dare transgress,

Warn me of ev'ry sin,
Forgive my secret faults,
And cleanse this guilty soul of mine,
Whose crimes exceed my thoughts.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. John 14. 15, &c.

He would be a traitor and a rebel, who should dare to set up his standard in England, and demand allegiance from the king's subjects, and require obedience to his commands, who had no right to the crown. So Jesus, if he is not the king of saints, the living and true God, but only a meer man, a prophet mighty in word and deed, a very good man, who taught the best morals, and set us a good example, as some proud, vain, ignorant creatures pretend; verily, if this were all, we, christians, could see no goodness in him. But he would be a bold usurper against the King of kings, and Lord of lords, striving to alienate the affections of the heart, and the obedience of the life from God, whom we are commanded to love and serve only. Therefore, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," saith Jehovah the mighty God, by the wonderful man Christ Jesus. Disciples know his voice. In love he hath done all things for their salvation. From love he requires all of them in duty. Obedience without love is slavery: Love without obedience is dissimulation. In keeping his commandments there is great reward, enjoyed in present peace, expected in future hope; both the fruits of free-grace and unmerited love, and secured by precious promises.

While others might hear of Jesus, and talk of the miracles Jesus wrought in the days of his flesh, yet those disciples only, who were obedient to his call and followed him, saw his glory, and enjoyed the comforts of his presence. So the closer disciples walk with Jesus in love and obedience, they enjoy more of the comforts of faith. And besides the gift of faith, as an evidence, they shall receive the witness of their being the children of God, even from the Spirit of truth, another comforter, who shall abide with them for ever, as a seal, earnest and pledge of their future glory. So Jesus prays—so the Father bestows—so the Spirit applies and comforts. Glory be to the ever blessed THREE, who thus agree in ONE, and bear witness on earth of salvation, to the comfort and joy of poor sinners.

The God of mercy be ador'd,
Who calls our souls from death,
Who saves by his redeeming word
And new creating breath.

To praise the Father and the Son,
And Spirit all divine,
The one in three, and three in one,
Let saints and angels join.

Return, O ye backsliding children; for I am married to you, saith the Lord. Jer. 3. 14.

When a child departs from an indulgent father, or a wife forsakes an affectionate husband; they, in effect, say, they have other objects in view, with whom they are more delighted, and from whom they expect greater happiness. O backsliding soul! Is this thy conduct towards the best of fathers, the most affectionate Bridegroom? Thy present practice loudly speaks this language, "I have other lovers; and after them I will go." Monstrous ingratitude! a child of special grace, and yet fly from thy most loving Father! a spouse of the most affectionate Bridegroom, and yet be unchaste to thy rightful Husband! Shocking carriage! And yet, hear, O soul, hear and wonder, hear and love, love and be ashamed, be ashamed and return. For marvelous grace! though thou hast broken thy marriage-contract, forfeited the privileges of children; yet the relation continues—children still. "I am married to you," notwithstanding all this thy unkind carriage, "saith the Lord." Amazing love! instead of "I will pursue with vengeance; overtake with destruction," it is, "I intreat with love, expostulate with kindness, invite with affection."

Who are thy present lovers? The rivals of thy Lord are thy greatest foes, and seek thy present misery and eternal destruction. Dost thou "live after the flesh?" Hath satan's wiles, and the snares of the world prevailed over thee? the world, the flesh and the devil? Poor soul! canst thou be happy in their friendship and embraces! Oh no! thou art got into bad, yea the worst company; and what leanness of soul is brought upon thee? Thy love to Jesus is grown cold—thy faith in him weak—zeal for him and his truth hath forsaken thee—the way of sin and folly pleaseth thee—sweet intercourse in private prayer, communion with thy God in public ordinances, is gone—thou neglectest thy duty—art grown shy of thy Father and his children.

Still thy father calls, thy husband wooes thee again and again to turn—to return. Love, the bond of relation, never alters on God's part, notwithstanding base, backsliding, and monstrous ingratitude. Special grace will make love-calls effectual. Such shall one day call to mind "the love of their espousals;" be ashamed and confounded for all they have done, and take up this language, "I come unto thee, for thou art my Father. I will go and return unto my first Husband, for then it was better with me than now." Hof. 2. 7.

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? Rom. 4. 9.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Col. 2. 8. Why this caution from the voice of inspiration? Truly, disciple, thy daily danger makes it expedient, "lest (saith the comforter) any man beguile you of your reward. Beware of men. Call no man Rabbi," saith thy Lord; lest any man judge against your privileges, impair your comforts, or distress your mind.

Here is every blessing to make poor sinners happy. Righteousness imputed without works. Iniquities forgiven, and sins covered. The not imputing sins. This trinity of blessings flow from the unity of free grace. Such blessedness COMETH, free as the air—unmerited as the light—comforting as the sun—possessed by the unworthy—enjoyed by the ill-deserving—sure to all the redeemed—the inestimably rich privileges of every believer in Jesus.

Here the wise God and vain man differ in judgment. Legal hearts are ever thinking of a righteousness obtained by our works, and pardon upon conditions: But God imputes, clothes with a righteousness without our works, even the best robe. None but toward children find fault with the father's gifts. For thy righteousness, even if perfect, O soul, is at best but the righteousness of a creature; but Jesus' righteousness is the righteousness of the adorable God-man; infinite in value like his precious blood, by which our sins are atoned. Therefore they are not imputed to us, because laid upon Jesus; therefore God pardons in justice to him. Christ hath performed every condition for us. Here is the nature of faith; it takes its views, and forms its judgment from revealed truths. So it evidences its divine original. Thus it gives all glory to God. So the sense of pardon is applied to the soul, by the Spirit, who comforts the soul in truth. And thus a living, vital union is preserved between Jesus and his members through faith. From a joyful sense of pardon love is increased—holiness incited—man is humbled—Jesus exalted—free grace gloried in—hope encouraged—slavish fears ejected—and the heavenly inheritance longed for as a free gift by Jesus. Thus all is of God, all is of grace, all cometh freely. Even eternal life is the free gift of God by Jesus Christ, who saith, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12. 32.

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 4. 6.

This is a glorious confession of faith, worthy to be wrote in letters of gold, and set with the most precious jewels, and ever to be worn as the believer's ornament and glory. For here is the rich display of sovereign grace, the wonder of almighty power, in producing light in the heart of sinners, who are by nature not only in the dark, but even darkness itself. Here the religion of Jesus is begun by the same omnipotent Agent, who called forth light in the beginning, upon this dark terraqueous globe. Light gladdens the whole creation of nature: and this spiritual light causeth joy in the soul; for it gives the knowledge of God's glory. In what respect? that God is glorious in majesty? this strikes us with horror. Glorious in power? That fills us with terror. Glorious in holiness? This causes despair. So every attribute and perfection of Jehovah would sink sinners into dread, astonishment and death.

But here is our relief, "It is the knowledge of the glory of God, in the person of the anointed Saviour." IN HIM, God's glorious favour, eternal love, everlasting counsel of peace, covenant of grace, promises of mercy, scheme of salvation shine with the most resplendent lustre. Hence pardon, love, peace, joy, holiness, hope, security, heaven in possession, glory in reversion; all, all centers in Jesus, in his person. Thus we behold the glory of God, and God in him. This is the only comfortable knowledge, the only reviving experience of the christian heart. And here we see how inseparably connected God's glory, and his people's comforts are. Each leads to the other, and both tend to lay sinners low in humility, and annihilate and sink them to nothing before a sovereign gracious Lord. For could a dark, confused chaos contribute any thing to the production of light? Canst thou, O worm of the earth, exert any power to cause the glorious luminary the sun to send forth its reviving beams of light? No; the first is by the command of the sovereign agent; the latter acts by the laws of its wise Creator. So as to spiritual light, saving knowledge, it is given to those who sought it not; it is made manifest to them who asked not after it. Thine is the power, to thee, to thee alone, Jehovah, be all the glory!

Now be the God of Israel bleis'd,
Who makes his truth appear;
His mighty hand fulfils his word,
And all the oaths he swore.

He makes his great salvation known,
By Christ he pardons sins,
While sovereign grace, and heav'nly love,
In its own glory shines.

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.
 Heb. 1. 3.

What St. Paul says of the resurrection of Jesus, 2 Cor. 15. may, with equal truth, be applied to his divinity. If Jesus be not truly and essentially the self-existing God, "All preaching is vain; all faith is vain;" all the saints of God must perish in their sins. But we have not so learned Christ, if so be we have heard him, and know the truth as it is in Jesus. His eternal power and Godhead angels adore, devils tremble at, saints rejoice in, and only poor, blinded, proud sinners dare cavil against and deny.

That Jesus is both Lord and God, lies at the foundation of our faith. That, as man, the anointed Saviour, he hath purged our sins, causes all our hope and comfort. On this rock Christ's church is built, and neither the "powers of earth and sin, nor the gates of hell shall prevail against it." When the Lord the Spirit brings the soul up to Nebo, the mount of prospect and prophesy, it has glorious views of the inheritance—it speaks of it—it fructifies—and the graces of faith, hope, love, peace, and joy, abound in the heart. But, alas! all is barren as a wilderness; unfruitful as a desert, while sin in its guilt and punishment is not known and believed to have been purged by the blood of Jesus. This is the only physic for sin-sick souls, the most reviving cordial for drooping spirits. The same blood, which was alone sufficient to purge away sin, is also all-sufficient to cleanse the conscience. Sweet consolation for the members of Jesus on earth! Their living head, in his human form, is at the right hand of the majesty in glory; the blessed object to whom we are ever to look, through whom every comfort flows, and on whom is our hope in every soul-conflict with sin and satan. This is the reasoning of faith: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. 5. 10.

There's none can know the Father right,

But those who learn it from the Son;

Nor can the Son be well receiv'd,

But where the Father makes him

known.

Then let our souls adore our God

That deals his graces as he please,

Nor gives to mortals an account,

Or of his actions, or decrees.

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Keep yourselves in the love of God. Jude ver. 21.

THE LOVE OF GOD, like every other attribute and perfection of Jehovah, is everlasting and unchangeable; even as the essence of God himself. This love is manifested to his people in Christ Jesus; he is the object in whom they are viewed and loved by the Father. As "Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" so is God's love toward them. Time, with all its concurring circumstances, can make no alteration or change, increase or diminution herein. But as to the sense and enjoyment of this love, the word of truth and experience of the saints plainly testify of its ebbings and flowings, its fervour and abatements in the soul. Hence the necessity of those tender calls, kind warnings, and loving counsels addressed to believers, in the word of truth. Therefore are they to be active as those who are made alive. The enjoyment of the love of God is our heaven below; to keep ourselves in the happy sense of it, is our highest privilege, our greatest happiness.

Wouldst thou ever enjoy it, O christian? Be much in meditation upon it—think daily, constantly of that unparalleled instance of it, God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son Jesus, to atone for sin by his precious blood—to justify sinners by his perfect righteousness. Dost thou know this by the gospel? This is love revealed. Dost thou believe this in thine heart by the Spirit? This is love felt and enjoyed. All, all flows from the rich, transcendently rich love of God in Christ Jesus. Oh be concerned daily to keep thy soul in and under a lively sense of this love! and also keep thyself by this love from worldly lusts, carnal indulgences, and sensual gratifications. These are forbidden fruits; thy flesh may long for and covet them, but by the love of God, by the mercies in Christ Jesus, and for thy soul's sake abstain from them. Know verily, as hurtful food will impair the health of thy body; so these things do as certainly tend to rob thy soul of its peace—damp the warm sense of God's love; and render thee cool, indifferent, and lifeless, when thou shouldst be looking after, and longing for, the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life.

My God, permit my tongue

This joy, to call thee mine;

And let my constant cries prevail

To taste thy love divine.

For life without thy love

No relish can afford;

No joy can be compar'd with this

To serve and please the Lord.

The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Prov. 4. 18.

Since the fall of man, there never was made known to the children of men, and to the end of time there never will be any other way of being made just or righteous, but by the righteousness of the man Christ Jesus. Just Noah, righteous Lot, meek Moses, faithful Abraham, patriarchs, prophets and apostles, they were all sinners in themselves, but "their righteousness is of me," saith Jehovah Jesus, Isa. 54. 17. So the Lord calls his people righteous, for they really are so in his sight. This truth should ever dwell in our minds; it is the foundation of all delight in God and love to him. Hence we are comforted in the way of truth and holiness. For the same Jesus, who is our righteousness, is also our light to direct our steps, and our path wherein we walk. He is the "light of the world, the light of life," saith St. John. "I am the way," saith Jesus. And St. Paul exhorts, "As ye have received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him." Col. 2. 6.

Our faith in Jesus is no new-fangled doctrine, but the same as was from the beginning. As christians are not left to the darkness of nature, so they are not led by sudden, transient flashes of light; but by the clear steady shining of truth upon their minds. And their walk, in the path of truth, is consistent and uniform.

Like the dawning-light of the morning, the path of truth first breaks in upon the soul, and gradually increaseth brighter and brighter. So we see clearer—believe stronger—love more fervently—hope more steadily—obey more delightfully—and long more cheerfully for the perfect day. Though at some seasons, when vapours, and mists of nature's corruption arise, and the night of affliction and desertion overtakes the just upright soul, he may be in fears, lest he should never hold out and see the perfect day. In such seasons, he is too prone to lend his ear to a whisperer, who is ever ready to dishearten him. What with his corrupt heart, satan's suggestions, and men's false doctrine, he is thrust fore at to make him afraid, lest he should fall and perish for ever; but God's power and truth will support him.

If the Lord, the comforting Spirit, had not left us another word of proof, in the whole bible, for the security of the just, this one text is sufficient: Wisdom hath spoken it; nor men nor devils shall reverse it: every justified soul shall see, shall enjoy the perfect day of Jesus' meridian glory, and salvation in his kingdom. Till then, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Job 17. 9.

But he [Jesus] answered her not a word. Matt. 15. 23.

What! the compassionate Saviour, who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, is he deaf to the cries, and dumb to the intreaties of a distressed sorrowful heart? No; love in the heart has always an open ear to complaints, a ready tongue to speak comfort, and a kind hand to relieve. But love afflicts, to bring his children to him, and to make them call upon him: He forbears to answer, that they may be the more importunate. God's delays prove faith's vigour, make love cling closer, prayer more fervent, and patience shine brighter. So the graces of children are drawn forth into lively exercise, and made manifest that they are wrought in God. Perseverance obtains the blessing in due time, and Jesus honours and applauds the grace of his beloved members with, O man, O woman, great is thy faith!

Christ knew what work he had wrought in this poor humble supplicant's heart, whereby she knew Jesus to be Lord and God; therefore he proved her and tried her, that her faith might thine bright to his glory and her soul's comfort. As she possessed the same faith, so she discovers the same resolution of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And, with Jacob, she would wrestle; and her heart determined, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Gen. 32. 26.

The silence of Jesus was very disheartning; when he speaks it is quite discouraging. Though she worshipped him and sighed out, "Lord, help me," yet Jesus seems rather to repulse than comfort her. But true faith ever sinks the soul lowest in humility, while it clings closest to the most high God. The soul owns its hateful vileness and utter unworthiness, and fixes all its plea upon free-grace mercy; all its hopes upon Jesus only. Thus Christ empties whom he delights to fill. He makes us to see and confess ourselves to be dogs, fit only to feed under the table, though he loves us as children, and all that he hath is ours, by free gift and rich grace: So sweetly and encouraging are our Lord's dealings. So should we ever trust in him who saith, "I have fatiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." Jer. 33. 25.

My spirit looks to God alone;
My rock and refuge is his throne;
In all my fears, in all my straits
My soul on his salvation waits.

Trust him, ye faints, in all your ways,
Pour out your hearts before his face:
When helpers fail, and foes invade,
God is our all-sufficient aid.

And patience [worketh] experience, and experience hope. Rom. 5. 4.

We are ever to consider the gospel as a proclamation of grace to rebels; a declaration of mercy to the profligate and abandoned; glad-tidings of salvation to lost, desperate, hopeless sinners. It finds the soul destitute of any one encouraging symptom; but brings all hope and encouragement with it. When the gospel becomes the "power of God to salvation" to any sinner, it works a mighty change in his state and practice. In the sweet experience, proof, or the trial of this, the soul is comforted; hope concerning his state is encouraged; hope of his own interest in Jesus and salvation, experience worketh in him. And this, not by legal terrors and dreadful horrors, as was Judas; nor by working up the animal passions to a flash of joy, just as the stony-ground hearers were affected by the word: but powerfully enlightning the soul to see the evil nature of sin, and the infinite preciousness of the Lord Jesus, so as to lothe and detest the former, and cleave to and trust alone in the latter.

Hence Jesus becomes the tried stone, the sure foundation of the soul. Upon the finished work of Jesus, all hope, in time and for eternity, is laid: All other foundations are rejected as sandy; all other hopes as vain. Faith in God's word, relying on his promises in Christ, begets resignation to his will, and patience under his dispensations, being assured, that "All things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose and grace." Rom. 8. 28.

We first experience his power in effectual calling, and then his love in keeping us close to himself, and obedient to his will. So we enjoy peace from him, and our hearts are cheerfully devoted to him. But how oft doth the believing soul find coolness of affection, heaviness of heart, and dejection of mind? Doth not this destroy his hope? No: even this experience, sad as it seems, worketh hope. Hereby, pride and self-confidence is slain—sin embittered—the soul humbled at the feet of Jesus, with "Thou, even thou alone art my hope; I dare not trust in any other; my soul shall make her boast of thee, and thee only."

We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves: And the more we live upon, and trust in the Lord, so shall we find hope spring up, love flourish, and holiness abound. Praised be the Lord our God, who is "the God of hope, and fills us with joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. 15. 13.

Having on the breast-plate of righteousness. Eph. 6. 14.

When Saul had put his own armour on David, to go against Goliath, the Philistine-giant, it seems as though his heart smote him, lest he should confide in it, and his heart be drawn from simply trusting to the power of God only; therefore he said, "I cannot go with these; I have not proved them: And David put them off him." 1 Sam. 17. 39. A faithful heart is ever jealous of the Saviour's glory. Though the believer is made righteous, and loves and walks in the paths of righteousness, yet he will glory in nothing before God, nor trust in any righteousness to shield him from the face of the enemy, but the perfect, spotless righteousness of his dear Lord and precious Saviour Jesus: He puts off all others, by the faith of Christ, as contrary to his hope. As he sees the purity and extent of the divine law, that it is quick and powerful, and is a discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart; knowing his own righteousness to be defective, and that in many things we all offend, he could as soon trust in an honey-comb for a breast-plate, as the moth-eaten garment of his own works.

Why doth satan, why doth the law so often wound our breasts, and grieve our hearts? But because we are not careful to guard with our breast-plate of Jesus's righteousness. It should ever be the joy and rejoicing of our souls to consider the work of Jesus as man and mediator. Did he shed his blood? did he die a cursed death? did he in his holy life (as foretold by Isaiah 59. 17.) "put on righteousness as a breast-plate?" Faith triumphs in his death, as the one atonement for sin: Faith glories in his life, as the one righteousness; so the once guilty soul is cleansed—so the once naked soul is clothed and adorned, and is ever glorious in the sight of God in this best robe of its elder brother Jesus—so also is the defenceless soul armed against every attack of sin, satan, the law and death. This breast-plate is more than proof against all. While pride and self-righteousness go hand in hand, and unite in objections against the imputed righteousness of our Immanuel; Humble, self-emptying souls, glory and triumph that their salvation is according to the laws of strict justice and perfect righteousness.

Possessing righteousness in Jesus, they draw nigh to a throne of grace with boldness now, and shall lift up their heads with joy before a righteous throne of judgment in the great day: "For righteousness delivereth from death." Prov. 10. 2.

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;

Midst flaming worlds in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head,

But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

Rom. 3. 21.

"Vain man would be wise, though he is born as a wild ass's colt." Job 11. 12. Proud man would be righteous, though conceived in iniquity, brought forth in sin, and no goodness dwells in him! This pride accompanies him all his days; yea it forsakes not new-born souls. Our natural notions are ever, that doing something will make us righteous. So the judgment of the flesh ever opposeth the truth of the Spirit. Carnal reason ever runs counter to spiritual faith: But it is the glory of believing hearts to take their views of righteousness from revealed truth. This, to the ineffable joy and unspeakable comfort of poor sinners, manifests a righteousness for their garment, which they toiled not for, neither did they spin. And what shall we say of it? Solomon, in all his glory, yea, angels in all their brightest glory and perfection, are not arrayed like one of those who is clothed with the righteousness of the God-man Christ Jesus.

Poor weak doubting believer, why takest thou thought for raiment? Shall not, hath not God clothed you? "O thou of little faith!" thou hopest; thou trustest in Jesus' blood alone for the pardon of thy sins, but art distressed in seeing thyself a poor sinner. Thou knowest thou art not righteous in thyself, and often fearest thou shalt never attain righteousness, and perish at last for want of it. Verily, thy face is turned towards Mount Sinai, instead of Mount Calvary—to Moses, instead of Jesus—to thy life of obedience, instead of his life of righteousness—to the law, (which requires all) instead of the gospel, which freely gives all.

So sure as thou hast the faith of Jesus in thine heart, thou hast the righteousness of Jesus on thy back, let law and conscience say what they will. God finds his children naked, he clothes them. Witnesses are ever at hand; evidences are never wanted to prove this truth. The Spirit of truth bears infallible testimony, by the law and the prophets, to the glory of this righteousness. Read, be joyful, and give all glory to free-grace for its free imputation: "The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference." ver. 22.

In vain we ask God's righteous law
To justify us now,
Since to convince and to condemn,
Is all the law can do,

Jesus, how glorious is thy grace!
When in thy name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness
That makes the sinner just.

Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.

1 Theff. 1. 5.

Sin, salvation, death, judgment, eternity, though matters of the highest moment, and utmost importance to us, yet we think of them with little concern, speak of them with great indifference, and treat the consideration of them as Felix did Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will send for thee." Acts 24. 25. And yet perhaps such have long sat under a preached gospel: hugely cry up and applaud the preacher, and are ready to condemn others who do not see and admire the excellency of the man. But alas! what are the most excellent words of man without the power of the Spirit? Light as air, ineffectual to soul-saving purposes, as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

The grand question is, have I inwardly known and felt the power of the gospel? Our gospel came unto you with power. It has an internal voice, it speaks glad tidings, good news of life and salvation to the very soul; it is the word of power to quicken dead souls to life: It is a revelation to the heart of pardon and peace by Jesus: it brings the clearest evidence, the fullest assurance along with it, that it is God's word of life and salvation. The Holy Ghost bears witness to it, in power and demonstration. Blessed souls! who are divinely assured of the truths of gospel-grace and love by Jesus; who embrace the gospel as their only hope, and flee and cleave to Jesus as their only refuge. But more blessed, yea most happy those believing souls who are upon the defensible mountains, and enjoy much assurance of their own personal interest in Jesus, and eternal life through him; and by the Holy Ghost are enabled to say, "I know that Jesus loved me and died for me."

This only can deliver the soul from all doubts and fears—inflame it with the most ardent love—inspire it with the most holy boldness—influence it to the most cheerful obedience—reign it to afflictive allotments—wing it with holy longings after Jesus and eternal glory—and make it joyfully triumphant over the grim tyrant death; with "Thanks be to God who giveth ME the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15. 57.

My Saviour, God, my sovereign prince, But brings his graces down to sense,
Reigns far above the skies; And helps my faith to rise,

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. John 1. 14.

When the Lord gave Lamech a son, he called his name Noah, which signifies repose or consolation; and he said, "This same shall comfort us concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Gen. 5. 29. Noah was an eminent type of Jesus. Every sinner, who is poor, and made low, (as Lamech signifies) has infinite reason so to conclude of Jesus, "This same shall comfort us, though the work and toil of our hands hath been evil, and we are cursed by reason of sin."

To be poor and made low in ones-self, and to be struck with the display of the glory of the Lord Jesus, is the work of the Spirit, by the word of truth, and is peculiar to believers in all ages. "Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day of incarnation; he saw it and was glad." And all the children of Abraham's faith now, as well as the apostles, see the glory of Jesus by the same Spirit, whose office is to glorify Christ.

To know Jesus, as man, as the anointed Saviour, brings life and peace to our hearts. To see his glory as God-man, fills our souls with the triumphs of salvation. Thus we are satisfied with him as our Lord and our God. We look to no other God, but the God in our flesh, who dwelt among us; he is full of grace and truth to us: all wrath and terror ceaseth against us; "For God was in Christ reconciling the world, not imputing sin." So God hath drawn nigh to us—so he hath embraced and loved us—so by faith we draw nigh to embrace and love him.

When Jesus is embraced in the arms of faith, the enraptured heart cries out, with Simeon, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "We run with patience the heavenly race, thus looking to Jesus." With this view, we meditate on our hastning dissolution with composure—expect the sure messenger with peace—look forward to approaching judgment with joy, being assured of the fight, the joyful fight of the glorified man Jesus, the judge who shall appear as the great God and Saviour; "Whom, having not seen in the flesh, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Pet. 1. 8. "For yet a little while and he shall certainly come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." 2 Thess. 1. 10.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in we ye might have peace: In the world ye shall have tribulation: But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.
John 16. 33.

Such is Christ's legacy to all his brethren: Peace in him: Tribulation in the world. Every disciple shall receive this bequest of his master. As to the former, a triune God of truth and faithfulness is engaged by promise and oath to give it. As to the latter, from the combined trinity, the world, flesh, and devil, every follower of Jesus will be sure to receive it. But alas! how apt are we when in the mount of peace with Jesus to cry, "Oh tribulation shall no more affect me!" On the other hand, when in the dreary valley of tribulation, then we are as ready to conclude, "There is no end to my troubles; I shall see peace no more." This was the case with David: one while we find him triumphing, "In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved." Ps. 30. 6. At another mournfully complaining, "Thou hidest thy face and I am troubled."

Too, too apt are we to judge of God's love to us by his providences, instead of his promises. Tribulation in the world is as necessary for the soul as peace in Jesus, or our loving Saviour would not have appointed it for us. One is not incompatible with, nor destructive of the other. Nay, is it not oft the case with thee, O christian, as of old, that "as sufferings abound, consolation abounds also." 2 Cor. 1. 5. Hast thou access by faith into the same grace with the apostles and church of old? dost thou with them "rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" hear and learn the same note which they sung: "we glory in tribulation." Why? Because they first rejoiced in hope of the glory of God; and they knew that "all things work together for good. Therefore they found by experience these sweet and soul-reviving effects: "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us." Rom. 5. 2—6.

Thus as Christ is ours, all things are ours. Tribulation and distress in the world is ours; as well as hope, patience, peace, love, and joy in Jesus. Sweet is it to observe how our dear Saviour words his legacy; it is like a cross richly ornamented with jewels of infinite value. Tribulation in the world stands encompassed with PEACE in the front, GOOD CHEAR and VICTORY in the rear. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5. 5.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh; yet henceforth know we him no more. 2 Cor. 5. 16.

How eminent does the grace of God shine in the conduct of Levi! when the glory of Jehovah was at stake—when his honour was to be vindicated against those who had sinned with an high hand: “He said unto his father and mother, I have not seen him:” That is, no one that mine eye shall pity, or mine hand spare, who has transgressed in this matter. “Neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children,” Deut. 32. 9. The Lord our God is a jealous God. It behoves his children to be valiant for the truth as it is in Jesus. It is their duty to face all opposition against it, and to stand in defence of it from every quarter; and to know no man after the flesh, so as to give up truth for fear of him. This is their highest honour upon earth; and this is highly acceptable in the sight of our God. Those who honour me I will honour, saith the Lord: But “knowing men after the flesh,” proves a snare to the soul. Many have suffered loss hereby. While they have conferred with flesh and blood, listened to the wisdom of carnal men, and consulted the judgment of the wife of this world, how have their minds been drawn from the simplicity that is in Christ? The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God—the righteousness of the flesh is an abomination in his sight. The spirit of inspiration hath taught us this profitable lesson. While we glory in Jesus as our wisdom and our righteousness, this sweet mystery makes us dead to the life of the flesh, the lusts of the flesh, and the glory of the flesh; yea, gives us the victory over the flesh. So we live in a spiritual kingdom, glory in Jesus as a spiritual Saviour, are delighted with spiritual companions, and are made comfortable by spiritual gifts and graces.

This is a sweet evidence of the life of the soul. While a Pharisee, Paul, gloried in carnal privileges, and the attainments of the flesh; but, “Behold he prayeth,” saith the Holy Ghost. Blessed proof of a new-born soul, when it soars to Jesus, and is dissatisfied with all the objects of nature, time and sense, and incessantly cries, “I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.” Phil. 3. 8.

He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

I. John 2. 23.

If so, we cannot pay too much homage, nor ascribe too much glory to Jesus, as some object. Did Jesus "receive from God the Father, honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" 2 Pet. 1. 17, 18. Is it the Father's will "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father? He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him." John 5. 23. May we not boldly say with Paul, on another occasion, "As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying" in Jesus, as my Lord, my God. Yea, we will acknowledge him in his lowest form and meanest appearance; as the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger—as a destitute and out-cast infant—as obscure and mean in his birth and parentage—working at a common ordinary employ—as without form and comeliness—despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs—destitute of a place where to lay his head—as mocked, derided, laughed to scorn—crowned with thorns in derision—condemned and crucified as an accursed wretch, unworthy to live in heaven or on earth—adjudged fit only to die, in company with thieves and highway-men, on a gibbet. Wholly to trust and rely on this man, this God-man Jesus of Nazareth, the root and offspring of David, this is "the FAITH of God's elect; and the acknowledgement of the truth which is after godliness." This is the only "HOPE of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Tit. 1. 1, 2. This is a "REPENTANCE to the acknowledgement of the truth." 2 Tim. 2. 25. Thus are simple, believing hearts, "comforted, being knit together in love, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 2. 2, 3.

In this rich mine of truth and consolation we are daily to dig for all wisdom, holiness and happiness; for in this acknowledgement of the Son we have the Father's rich love, and precious promises; and the holy Spirit's power, influence and witness; "ever giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1. 12.

That I may win Christ. Phil. 3. 8.

No sooner had good king Hezekiah established his throne in righteousness, restored religion in his kingdom, set his whole heart to serve the Lord, and his God prospered him; but an invading Sennacherib enters his territories, and encamped against his fenced cities. 2 Chron. 32. 1. Scripture and experience daily preach to God's children, "This is not your rest;" you are in a militant state. Though Jesus hath taken possession of the soul, and cast out the strong man armed, think not of folding your hands, and saying, I shall see war no more; for your adversary has many other games to play. He will not only encamp against your fenced cities, and attack your outworks, but will also attempt your very heart and mind. Beware of such suggestions as these; they are the whispers of a destroying foe, "Come, you are now an excellent christian—you have a tongue to speak for Jesus—you don't live and act as the rest of the careless, sinful world—you have made great advances in holiness—now you have somewhat to glory in yourself before God." Jesus, Master, save us in this hour of Satan's attack! When in such a storm, better to cast overboard all the heavy lading of self-confidence to right the ship.

Let us ever remember Jesus is all our gain and all our glory. We are still poor sinners. By renouncing all, and cleaving to him, we enjoy all in him. No fruits produced, no comforts experienced, but by abiding in him. What! possess Jesus, and yet want to win him? Yes; Jesus-enamoured hearts, like avaricious gamblers, never, never think they have enough of Jesus in time, till they have gained the full enjoyment of him in glory: They give up all for his sake. Wherefore? on terms and conditions to barter for an interest in Christ? No; gracious, loving hearts detest such base undervaluing thoughts of their infinitely precious Saviour; as though the dross and dung of their doings and performances were to be put in competition with his matchless excellency; who is our prize, our portion, our treasure. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or what is there on earth I desire in comparison of thee?" will ever be the language of faith.

My God, my life, my love,
To thee, to thee I call;
I cannot live if thou remove,
For thou art all in all.

What empty things are all the skies,
And this inferior clod?

There's nothing here deserves my joys;
There's nothing like my God.

The smiling of thy face,
How artiable they are!
'Tis heaven to rest in thine embrace
And no where else but there.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.
 Luke 13. 24.

Thou feeble-minded disciple, though weak in faith, thy Saviour speaks not thus to discourage thee from seeking salvation by Jesus only; for he also says, "Every one that seeketh findeth;" but rather he would animate and encourage thy soul in the conflicts of faith, and in striving against every enemy that opposeth thy entering the kingdom by the strait gate, even by the one atonement, and one righteousness of Jesus. His design is also to shew that men may not only seek, but strive, yea strive as in an agony "to enter in, but shall not be able," because they expect to enter the kingdom by some other gate than Jesus. So the apostle says, "No man is crowned, except he strive lawfully." Earnestness, zeal, activity, avail nothing, while Jesus is not the only object. His blood, the only plea for pardon: his righteousness, the only hope for acceptance. But this, in the eyes of self-righteous professors, makes the gate appear too strait indeed. Hence they seek to enter by ways more pleasing to their pride, and more agreeable to the corrupt lusts of their nature. So that striving is not so much opposed to seeking, as the strait gate Jesus is to every other method of salvation of man's devising. There is an awful denunciation against such, Isa. 45. 9. "Wo be to him that striveth with his maker." These potsherds of the earth dare contend against the sovereignty of God's wisdom, power and grace. But here is thy wisdom, believer, humbly to submit to the wisdom of God; cheerfully to accept salvation by grace through Jesus, and to strive, by God's power strengthening thee, against every enemy that opposeth thy entering into the kingdom by the strait gate.

As certainly as there is a devil in hell, there will be false teachers on earth: so long as thou art alive in the body, thou wilt have corrupt lusts, carnal reason, the workings of pride, unbelief and self-righteousness. Now all these unite to oppose thy faith, and contend against thy hope; but thy master, who calleth thee to arms, bids thee "Be of good courage, and strive for the mastery." In his strength thou art sure to conquer and win the prize. "Press forward; striving against sin;" Heb. 12. 4. "Striving for the faith of the gospel;" Phil. 1. 27. "Striving fervently in prayers;" Col. 4. 12. "Striving according to his workings, who worketh mightily in his people." Col. 1. 29.

Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Psalm 42. 11.

We are not to expect the sunshine of joy all the way through this vale of tears. Comfortable frames and joyful feelings, though sweet and delightful, are not always so profitable to the soul. Were we always on the mount of joy, alas, we should forget we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth; but should be for building tabernacles of rest in a polluted place; and cry out with the highly-favoured disciples, "It is good for us to be here; but they knew not what they said." Luke 9. 33. It is the glory of a christian to live by faith on Jesus; to judge of his Saviour's love from the word of truth, more than by sense and feeling; yea under dejection and disquiet of soul, then to hope and trust in God, to check and rebuke ones-self for doubts and diffidence; this is truly the exercise of faith. Faith supports the soul, and lifts it above the determination of carnal reason and the suggestions of sense. The believer stands steadily by the word of truth, though in heaviness for a season; being persuaded that shortly he shall rejoice in and praise God, even for this gloomy dispensation; concluding from the word of grace and God's faithfulness, "Jehovah Jesus is the health of my countenance, and my God." This is the very essence of faith. Such the sweet experience of David. Mark the frequent declaration, to this purpose, in the 42d and 43d Psalms. The Holy Ghost hath recorded this for our instruction.

Disciple, it is well for thee to learn wisdom hereby. Thy frames may vary—the foundation of God's love standeth sure—his promises cannot fail—his word of truth, yea, the oath of Jehovah, is engaged for the salvation of all who "have fled to Jesus for refuge." Thou mayest meet with many things, from within and without, to cast down thy soul, to deject and disquiet thee; but thou art called to look to Jesus, not to stagger at the promises through unbelief; but, like the father of the faithful, "against hope to believe in hope;" not to consider thine own corrupt nature—its longings to evil—its enmity to grace, so as to give up thy hope. There is ever cause of humility, but no reason for casting away thy confidence in Jesus. Though thou sinkest to hell, in the view of thy deserts, yet, through the righteousness of Jesus, life and salvation are procured for the hell-deserving. Encourage thy soul to hope in him, so shalt thou praise and glorify him. "I will bless the Lord at ALL TIMES, his praise shall CONTINUALLY be in my mouth." Why so? "Because my soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Psalm 34. 1, 2.

*We know when he shall appear we shall be like him :
for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3. 2.*

Why should the Lord, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy, lay an embargo on our fully gratifying ourselves in the use of them? Why are we called to daily mortification and self-denial, as to sensual objects? Verily, it is all in love to our souls; that Jesus, and spiritual objects, might be more enjoyed: for experience proves the life of sense to be opposite to the life of faith. The more pleasure, comfort, and happiness we enjoy in the things of this life, this tends to make us love the world, and loth to leave it; and so our affections to Jesus cool, our desires after his appearing abate in their fervour, and we lose our longings after the unclouded sight of him in glory. So St. Paul reproves christians of old: "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" How justly applicable is this interrogation to us also? Reflect on this soul-reviving truth, Yet a little while and Jesus shall appear. So sure as he was once upon earth in our nature, he will appear again in the same human body, exalted and glorified. And can we know and believe this as an undoubted truth, live upon it in expectation, without finding a deadness to this present world, and all its enjoyments? Here we feel sin in our flesh, pains in our bodies, afflictions our companions, wanderings and deadness in duties, trials and temptations of various sorts, and innumerable evils of every kind doth this short life abound with. But at the appearing of Jesus all will be at an end: for we shall be like him. Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like to his glorious body. Most blessed sight! most desirable fruition! we shall see our Jesus as he is. Once the despised Nazarene—once the devoted victim to curse and wrath: But now the Lord of life and glory; bestowing immortality and eternal life upon his dearly-purchased, blood-bought members. O were our hearts more with Christ on the cross, and more with him on his throne by faith, how would sin be subdued, the world overcome, satan conquered, and our happy hearts triumphing in love? saying, "We are more than conquerors over all, through Jesus that hath loved us."

O the delights, the heav'nly joys!

The glories of the place,

Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams

Of his o'erflowing grace!

This is the Man, th' exalted Man,
Whom we unseen adore

But when our eyes behold his face,

Our hearts shall love him more.

And while our faith enjoys this sight,

We long to leave our clay;

And wish thy fiery chariots, Lord,
To fetch our souls away.

Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart. 2 Chron. 32. 26.

Outward, gross, abominable sins, self-righteous Pharisees cry out against, and profess to humble themselves for: but to mourn over, and be humbled for heart-sins, spiritual pride, &c. is peculiar to gracious souls. We read of two things in the word, the most opposite to each other: Hear, and adore! the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, "humbleth himself" to visit man. Psalm. 113. 6. Hear, and be astonished! "Man opposeth and exalteth himself against God." 2 Thess. 2. 4. "Pride proceedeth, from within, out of the heart," saith Jesus, Mark 7. 21. This makes us murmur against the God of providence; fretful under his dispensations, forgetful of his benefits, and unthankful for his mercies.

Pride opposeth the sovereign God of grace, and would snatch the crown of glory from the everlasting God of love, and place it upon the head of that guilty creature, of a day, man. It is this that swells the haughty mind with indignation against the truths of Jehovah.

That salvation is wholly by grace, free favour, unmerited love, unconditional election of God the Father by Jesus Christ, is contrary to the proud vain thoughts of man; therefore he is against it. For this leaves him nothing whereof to glory in himself; that he has done, or can do, to fulfil terms and conditions, to gain an interest in salvation, or procure a title to glory.

Here God alone is glorified—Christ exalted—grace reigns—truth established: while the poor sinner's mouth is stopped, his honour laid in the dust, and in self-abasement he humbles himself for the pride of his heart. So grace triumphs over all the ruin of the fall. Thus it affects sinners when it reacheth the heart. All boasting is excluded. "O righteous Father! thy will be done," in sovereign grace and electing love. Thou hast a right to do what thou wilt with thine own. Grace, favour, mercy, faith, repentance, hope, peace, love, holiness, heaven, all is thy free gift by Jesus. None hath any claim on thee; guilt has forfeited all. But to the wretched and helpless thou hast made thyself a debtor by free promise and sovereign proclamation in Christ Jesus. Do I see this? is my heart soft and yielding to submit to salvation by grace only? Wherefore is this to me, while others are blinded to the truth, and their hearts hardened against it? The work is thine; all the glory, all is due to thee alone; for "even so, righteous Father, it seemed good in thy sight."

Such are the sentiments of gracious humble souls; to such he "giveth more grace." "For God resisteth the proud, [who oppose the Father's electing love, and the righteousness of his Son], but giveth grace to the humble," [whose hope is not in himself, but in the Lord his God]. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." 2 Pet. 5. 6.

David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. 1 Sam. 17. 37.

FAITH, by ancient writers, has been stiled the 'Queen of graces.' As such she displays her dignity, by disdain to consult any power below the King of saints. When she calls in reason and reflection upon past experiences, it is to give all the glory to the power of her sovereign Lord.

Thus David makes confession of faith in his king. What was the gigantic size, the formidable appearance, and the lordly threatnings of his Philistine antagonist? To the eye of his faith, all was mean and contemptible; for he saw him that was invisible; and he fixed his confidence on the invincible power of the Omnipotent; not considering himself, "but he was strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He had sweet experience of the truth of his Lord: "To him that believeth all things are possible." Mark 9. 23. He had seen the power of the Lord in delivering him from the fierceness of a lion, and from the strength of a bear; and therefore says, not with a perhaps or a peradventure, but absolutely in full confidence of faith, "The Lord hath delivered, and he will deliver." And the history fully assures us, "According to his faith, so it was."

Now "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." Rom. 15. 4. Here is a lesson of instruction, from which disciples of Jesus may learn the doctrine of self-despair. Thine enemies are fierce as lions, strong as bears, potent and formidable as Goliath of Gath. To know thou hast neither might nor strength, and to despair of victory from thyself, is thy wisdom. This humbling lesson proud nature is averse to; but it is profitable to the spirit. By faith we glory in the Lord and him only. Canst thou look back to past experience of his grace and power? Can I call to mind, that in such danger the Lord appeared as my deliverer; at such a time I sweetly experienced the Lord's power, and triumphed over mine enemies; therefore I will trust in the Lord and not be afraid? Past experiences encourage future hopes. A tried friend is a sure friend. To forget past mercies is ungrateful. To bury God's former dealings with our souls in oblivion, is dishonourable to our Saviour. Not to consider Jesus as the only hope, and live upon him day by day in the exercise of faith, is to live below our privilege. Never arraign his love, because he suffers thine enemies to put on a dreadful form, and attack thee with violence; this is to draw thy faith into exercise, that thy soul may have larger experience of his love and deliverance. Thus saith the Lord unto you, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." 2 Chron. 20. 15.

Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. Rev. 16. 15.

Vain confidence begets spiritual sloth. Licentious principles harden the heart in sin, deafen the ear to the calls of grace, and cause the tongue to pronounce evangelical exhortations to love and obedience, Legal; but the faith of Jesus enlivens to duty, and inspires the soul with godly jealousy and holy watchfulness. So the members of Jesus are blessed. Blessed in him with all spiritual blessings. And they enjoy a sweet sense of blessedness in obeying him. "Behold I come," saith Jesus the head. In the faith of this, enable me, Lord, to watch alway, saith every living member. We know but in part. There are infinitely greater blessings to be found in Jesus. More of his knowledge—his love—more of his image—greater conformity to, and likeness of him. For this we are called to watch, and wait, and pray continually, lest we lose the garments of truth, the clothing of humility, the adorning of the gospel, and sorrow overtake us, and shame cover us. So also against the desperate wickedness of our nature, the devices of satan, and the deceits of an ensnaring world. None fully know the dangers to which they are exposed, and how dreadfully they may be suffered to fall. Most true, Jesus both can, and will keep all his by his power through faith unto salvation. But it is as true, thou wilt have sad evidence of thy interest in him, and that his power is engaged for thy support, while his word is not thy rule of conduct.

Comfort and peace of soul are enjoyed in the way of circumspection and watchfulness, care and diligence, studying to approve ourselves as God's children, "by a holy walk and godly conversation." Awful instances are frequent and visible, of many poor souls, "who did run well for a season;" but satan hath hindered. They have forsaken the precious truths of Jesus, the world has enslaved them, and their conversation-garments are defiled with gross and abominable sins. Their minds appear destitute of faith, love and holiness, and their shame is seen and manifest. A state, how deplorable! how much to be dreaded! Serious thoughts are terrifying—self-examination they fly from—the view of death fills them with horror—an appearing forsaken Jesus they dread. But he will come. Every eye must see him. Though as a thief, suddenly; yet to his faithful ones not dreadfully, to rob and destroy them; but to gather his members together, that they may be ever one with him. "And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." 1 John 2. 28.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 2 Cor. 12. 8.

Our Saviour represents God's own elect as crying day and night to him. Luke 18. 7. Sore temptations, soul-burdens, satan's buffetings, are peculiarly felt by them. Their crying under them is a proof of spiritual life—their crying to God only, is an evidence of the faith of God's elect—their intreaties to be delivered from them, shews the sanctified holy disposition of their souls. Thus the Lord draws out into exercise the graces of his children. His eyes are ever upon them—his ears open to their prayers—and his almighty power and grace sufficient to deliver them. But “he that believeth, must not make haste.” We must tarry the Lord's leisure, and be strong in hope. His time is best. It is God's will we should tell him of our trials and temptations. After we have done this, “we have need of patience;” we must wait for the promise being fulfilled.

Paul prayed again and again, till the buffetings were continued—his mind was uneasy—his soul distressed—the enemy triumphing—the Lord making as though he heard not. Prayer and patience must go hand in hand. Murmurings are the offspring of unbelief. Presumption ariseth from pride. To lie humble at the feet of Jesus is our wisdom. Indulge no hard thoughts of the Saviour's will to make thee holy, or power to make thee happy; though sin and Satan, like unwelcome visitors, daily intrude, appear in various shapes, attack from different quarters, and seem in some sort to gain upon thee in thought, word or action. When inwardly discomposed by unholy tempers, and outwardly harrassed by various temptations, poor souls are ready to think, the war will end in their destruction; Jesus will never give the complete victory. But most assuredly he will. In due time we shall reap if we sown not. Let it suffice, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” saith the triumphant Head in glory, to each of his militant members on earth.

Importunate praying, humble waiting, confident believing, comfortable hoping, are the very life and essence of a Christian. And let his besetting temptations, conflicting trials be what they may, it is his blessed privilege to write, with the pen of faith, “What shall separate from the love of Christ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” Rom. 8. 35, 37.

Let me but hear my Saviour cry,
Strength shall be equal to the day;

Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Lest on all-sufficient grace.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise. Luke 23. 43.

Unbelief, how great its power! how strong its influence! it would ever blind the eyes, and harden the heart against Jesus and his grace; but "he shall divide the spoil with the strong." The prophet's prediction is here clearly fulfilled. The sovereignty of grace is fully displayed. Our Lord's own doctrine "One shall be taken, the other left," Matt. 24. 40. is truly verified in these two thieves. Pride is the companion of unbelief. This keeps men in obstinacy—they will not see—they will not bow to God's sovereignty. Though this is a comfortable truth to self-abased souls: God's power is their hope. But doth our Lord bring sinners to glory without faith, repentance, and holiness? Doth he leave his people in their sins and rebellions? No; blessed be his name! Jesus is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; therefore he gives repentance and remission of sins. "So he saves his people from their sins." So he makes them happy in his love by the secret power of the Spirit's inward operations. Who made these two companions in sin, these blasphemers of Jesus to differ? Grace, sovereign distinguishing, almighty grace did this wonderful work, "And it is marvelous in our eyes." How rapid its power! how swift its race! in one moment a railer against Jesus is changed to a believer in him—a proud rebel to an humble suppliant—a self-justifying sinner to a Christ-exalting saint; converted, pardoned, sanctified and made meet for glory—to-day hell-deserving—to-day in paradise. Thus this thief believed with his heart unto righteousness, and made confession with his mouth unto salvation.

What hath grace done! what is it not able to effect? Sweetest encouragement to the vilest of sinners, to look to Jesus: strongest assurance for the weakest believers to abide in him. "Lord Jesus, remember me," proceeds from grace in the heart of his members. "Thou shalt be with me in paradise," is the gracious answer from the tongue of the head. It was the grace of our Lord Jesus that saved this thief, this highway-man, and translated him from a gal lows on earth to a crown in glory. The most amiable character, the most upright person hath nothing else to look to, to hope for, or trust in, but the cross of Christ for salvation. This is all our glorying. By the death of Jesus we live. The same spirit that enables the soul to believe on Jesus on earth, conforms it to Jesus in likeness and love; and sanctifies it through the faith of Jesus, and makes it "meet for the heavenly inheritance with the saints in glory." Col. 1. 12.

That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. John 17. 2.

Deism, or a rejection of God's revealed truth, is natural to us all. Hence some have said, "The religion of nature is the religion of satan;" for it affects a spirit of pride, and independence of God, and rebellion against his will. Why does a deist reject the way of salvation by Jesus? Truly, because it is contrary to his natural notions, he cannot reconcile it to the attributes and perfections of deity. Upon the very same footing many professors abhor, with the utmost indignation, the scripture doctrines of God's everlasting love, unconditional election, and predestination of sinners to eternal life, by Jesus. Both proceed upon the same principles, carnal reason, pride, and self-righteousness; these reign in the heart, and so blind the eyes. But,

It is the believer's mercy to see the truth, his humility to submit to it, and his duty to contend for it in love. Thus our elder brother Jesus ever acted, and thus he prays in submission to the will of his Father, and our Father. Though he had power over all flesh, yet only to those, "the MANY, whom the Father had given him, was he to give eternal life." They were given to him as his charge, to redeem, sanctify, and save. They were given to him as the reward of all his toils and sufferings. They are the precious jewels which compose his mediatorial crown. Hence he glories of them, "Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me." Isa. 8. 16. Hence they are distinguished by special grace; they possess the gift of precious faith; "called the faith of God's elect." Tit. 1. 1. as being peculiar to them only. By this they enjoy the sense of the Father's electing love—the knowledge of the Son's redemption—and the comforting witness of the Holy Ghost.

One of the most excellent of all human compositions, full of truth and sweetness, well worthy the constant study of every christian, is the 17th article of the church of England. Our pious reformers thus speak, "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God; whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ, out of mankind; and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour; wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in due season. They, through grace, obey the calling—they be justified freely—made sons of God by adoption—made like the image of Jesus Christ, they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain everlasting felicity." "Hold fast the form of sound words." 2 Tim. 1. 13.

Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. Mat. 7. 12.

It is the observation of the Heathens, that "If virtue was to appear in human form, men would be enamoured with her beauty." But, alas! this has been proved to be an idle speculation; for that glorious man Jesus, in whom every virtue centered, and who was adorned with every grace; who, went about doing good, and taught as never man taught, "yet was he despised and rejected of men." Blindness of mind is a first-born sin. To see form and comeliness in Jesus, is peculiar to enlightened souls. To hear, love and obey the holy precepts he taught, ariseth from a renewed heart. Morality and good works are at the tongue's end of every man. The most immoral and profligate are ever ready to applaud, to boast of, and to trust in—even what they never practise.

It is the christian's mercy, that he is not only delivered from such awful delusion; but what Jesus taught outwardly, in word, is wrote inwardly in his heart by the power of the Spirit. Therefore obedience is delightful from inward principles. Though he is not called to merit the love of God by his moral obedience, yet love is the sweet constraining principle to moral observances. So that "Love is the fulfilling of the whole law." As "whatever is not of faith is sin;" So whatever proceeds not from love, is contrary to holiness. An immoral christian is as inconsistent a character, as a chaste harlot. Heathens might talk of this golden rule—the law may command it—the prophets may instruct in the nature of it—natural men may pretend to and admire it; but heavenly-taught believing souls only are enabled to love it in the spirit of their minds, and to obey it in their life and practice.

Verily, disciple, though Jesus gave no laws, by the fulfilling of which thou shouldest obtain a title to eternal life; yet he, who fulfilled all righteousness for thy salvation, calls thee to love and obey his precepts. The moral precepts of Jesus are as much enjoined by him, as when he says, "Come unto me, all that are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." In obeying this thou findest comfort to thy soul: In observing the golden rule of morality, thou bearest a noble testimony to the honour of Jesus, to the glory of God, and to the good of thy fellow-creatures. It behoves to beware, lest Jesus "is wounded in the house of his friends," and the way of truth be evil spoken of through a contrary conduct; "For, saith Jesus, Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15. 14.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. Heb. 4. 16.

Very few, comparatively, of the subjects of an earthly monarch, are permitted free access to majesty. This is too high an honour to be made common. Kings courts are for the noble and eminent in birth and fortune. The poor and destitute, the miserable and distressed have no admission to the throne of earthly kings. But ye poor distressed subjects of Jesus, the King of kings, it is not thus with you. Your King, though ever on a throne, where majesty and glory shine with the brightest lustre, yet, grace, mercy, and kindness are freely dispensed to needy souls. Hither you are invited to come; yea more, to come boldly. Why? because you are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing?" Nay, but because your King knows you are "poor and miserable, blind and naked creatures in yourselves" day after day: Nothing to present to your King to procure his favour—nothing to bring, which deserves his acceptance of you. But he loves your persons, and has riches for your poverty, eye-salve for your blindness, a garment for your nakedness, a robe for your rags, and mercy for your misery.

Your Mediator with his blood, your High-Priest with his much incense, always intercedes. There can be no period of your life but what is a time of need. Who has obtained all the mercy? Who has found all the grace, which can be dispensed from this throne? Thou art still a sinner, and wantest mercy and grace; thou hast still need of both, and as thou findest thy want of mercy, thy need of grace, hither thou mayest always repair with boldness; here thou mayest ever expect a rich supply. For God the Father is the fountain of grace and mercy. Jesus, the Saviour, the treasurer, "all fulness of grace dwells in him." The Spirit, the comforter, is the dispenser of mercy and grace. Why then, O soul, that backwardness, that shyness, which too, too often hangs upon thee? What privilege so great? what encouragement so strong?

"Come with boldness," yet consistent with awe and reverence. Boldness of faith, which is grounded on something without a man, on nothing in him; not on the fervent heart of love, the bleeding heart of repentance, the active life of obedience, the suffering mind of patience; but faith fixes on Jesus, and the believer comes with an empty heart and hand, to be filled with the free gifts of grace. With boldness of speech to Jesus as his friend and brother, freely to pour his complaints into his loving heart, and to tell him of all his sorrows. Sweetest encouragement from the friend of sinners! "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, (most blessed promise!) and I will give you rest." Matt. 11. 28.

Unto you that believe he is precious. 1 Pet. 2. 7.

We are loved with PRECIOUS LOVE; redeemed by PRECIOUS BLOOD; comforted by PRECIOUS PROMISES; justified by PRECIOUS FAITH: Yea, righteousness, holiness, heaven, we have by union with a PRECIOUS Jesus. Surely then, "to them that believe he is precious."

Say, ye sons and daughters of poverty and affliction, is not this a time when friends grow cool and desert you? But in such a season, did you find one friend who visited you in your distress, who was always saying kind things to you? and ever doing all possible good for you, when in prison he sought you out, and set you at liberty; when sick he was your physician and healed you; when naked he clothed you; when in abject poverty he made you rich; thus was always pleased when he could make you easy and happy. Say, is not this a friend of ten thousand; a friend who sticketh closer than a brother? Is not such a one precious indeed?

This, and infinitely more than all this, hath Jesus done for a poor wretched race of sinners. Therefore he is indeed to them a precious "Friend, who loveth at all times: the precious brother who is born for adversity." Prov. 17. 17. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Precious in what he hath done yesterday—shed his blood for the guilty—wrought out a righteousness to clothe the naked soul, to-day he is pleading our cause before the throne, where "he ever lives to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him." Heb. 7. 25. He is making love visits, sending kind tokens, refreshing manifestations of his favour, causing poor hearts to rejoice in him, filling them with peace and comfort through him: Inestimably precious in what he is doing, and in what he will do. For Jesus will never leave his members till he has brought them safe through a wicked world, given them the victory over all sin, satan and death; and lodged their precious souls in the arms of his embraces; "for where I am there shall all my servants be," saith the loving Saviour. O who can say how infinitely precious Jesus is to the saints above! This we must die to know; but "now we know but in part, and can speak but in part;" yet what we do see and know is by faith, and we can say, "he is precious indeed."

However distressing our circumstances to sense and feeling, yet his eye seeth us, his heart of love is towards us, he is Immanuel, God with us. Are we sick of sin? He is our Physician. Is sin our burden? He is our mighty deliverer. Doth the law accuse and condemn us? He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Do lust and corruption rebel against us? He is our sanctification. Do the world, sin and satan threaten our destruction? He is JESUS, our Saviour, our salvation.

MARCH 5.

(64)

D. H. RAM

Who bath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.

2 Tim. 1. 9.

Such as our natural notions of sin and danger are, such is our judgment of salvation and deliverance. In our fallen state we see only the fruits of sin in outward actions; but consider not the corrupt, cursed root from whence they spring. Hence poor souls think it no great and difficult matter to be saved; especially if they have some specious shew of the external adornings of sobriety, morality, and religion. Happy souls, who have escaped this dangerous rock of pride and self-deceit: for when the scales of ignorance fall from the eyes, and the veil of unbelief is taken off the heart; when the true light shineth in the mind, and the purity and spirituality of God's holy law is made manifest in the conscience; the sinner sees his state truly desperate. Sin appears exceeding sinful; justly deserved hell and wrath is most dreadful. And most deplorable of all, he finds he must utterly sink into despair and perish for any thing he is able to do to save his soul. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is the cry of his heart. "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity," saith the Lord, Isa. 29. 18. — The book of God's eternal counsel shall be disclosed — his purpose and decree of salvation shall be made known by his revealed truth to the heart — the joyful sound of salvation by Jesus shall be heard in the soul — and the poor sinner shall see Christ's finished work as his only hope; for love presided in the counsel; and grace shall reign to salvation. The gospel trumpet sounds reconciliation to sinners; salvation for lost souls. Their good works produced it not; their sins, however numerous and great, shall not deprive them of it. We are first saved, and then called to know it, and glorify God for it.

When called with an effectual calling to Jesus, by the word and power of the Spirit, we possess and enjoy hope in God, and comfort from him. Effects prove their cause. It is not a bold, confident assurance, "I am elected; I know my sins are pardoned;" that is of the very essence of gospel faith; or that applies the comforts of gospel salvation to the soul; but election to salvation is made manifest by "a holy calling." Paul did not only confidently assert he was an apostle; but, says he, "truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you." 2 Cor. 12. 12. And verily, disciple, if thou art saved in purpose and decree from eternity, redeemed by Jesus in time, effectual vocation is the consequence; whereby thou art called to the knowledge of a holy Saviour by a holy faith; art a partaker of a holy nature; and wilt "shew thy faith by thy works;" inward purity of heart and outward holiness of life and conversation will ever be the study and joy of thy soul. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12. 11.

MARCH 6.

(155)

MARCH 2

Striving against sin. Heb. 12. 4.

What poor, low, legal work is this! say some. We are happy in Christ without such a strife. We are perfect, fully born again, perfectly sanctified and free from all sin; therefore our strife is at an end, say others. Alas! poor honest upright christian, thou art ever in danger, on the right hand of licentiousness, and on the left hand of delusion, and from an evil nature within. What with the white devil of pride, and the black devil of lust, thou art ever liable to be seduced from the truth. What a mercy to have a true touchstone to have recourse to, to try men and doctrines by! The experiences of christians of old, as recorded by the Spirit of truth, afford us quite different sentiments of the influence of gospel-grace.

The regenerate soul being restored to the life and love of God by the faith of Jesus, ever, while it is imprisoned in the body, is surrounded within and without, with foes of every kind. These, like mighty combatants, strive and fight against its rest, holiness, and comfort. Here the christian, under the influence of the Spirit, cannot, will not, dare not be passive, to suffer sin, in its tyrannizing nature, to lord it over him. But he will be active, fighting, striving, wrestling against his bosom inmate, his worst foe, indwelling sin. It reflects a dishonour upon the author and the grace of faith, to suppose it leaves the soul in an idle kind of waiting, or melancholy sitting still; or that it can be satisfied with carnal gratifications, and sensual delights of a perishing world. No: being alive to God, possessing the faith of Jesus, we shall strive for the mastery, and be temperate in all things. Our very sighs and groans, sensible weariness and heaviness, evidence our conflicts and struggles. Our cry to Jesus for strength proves our wisdom, and forebodes our victory. Our patient enduring, submissive waiting, yet steadily persevering, and constant striving, till deliverance, perfect deliverance, is granted, shews that "we have the mind of Christ."

Now the Lord's promise is, "I will drive out your foes by His ple and little." In a very, very short time, (O christian, lift up thy head with joy, thy redemption draweth nigh) the joyful sound of perfect victory shall be proclaimed; and the enemies you this day see, feel and groan under, strive and fight against, you shall see them no more for ever.

Lord, I esteem thy judgments right. In vain we boast perfection here.

And all thy statutes just: While sin desires our frame, we'd

Thence I maintain a constant fight. And sink our virtues down so far

With us, that sinning lies. Then leave us to the hands

Of sin, till we are dead in sin.

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee; and will look up. Psalm 5. 3.

In the Lord we all live, move, and have our being; therefore it is the indispensable duty of all men to call upon the name of the Lord in prayer. But what is a duty from nature and reason, is esteemed a rich privilege, an inestimable blessing, by the children of grace. The pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplication, is one of those spiritual blessings wherewith they are blessed in Christ Jesus. In the exercise of this, saints in all ages have experienced sweet fellowship and communion with God, and been indulged with many mercies which they sought for from him. "And this is the confidence that we have in Jesus, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." 1 John 5. 14.

This duty seems to be the first employ of David's heart: he begun the day in prayer. As soon as his eyes were favoured with the morning-light, he directed them to look up unto the Lord. After his tongue had been locked up in silent sleep, the first sound of his voice breaks forth in address to his God. Why is this holy man's practice recorded? Doubtless it was written for our instruction; to remind us that it is sweet to begin the day with God. Better to go from a throne of grace into the business of life, than after worldly concerns have intruded on our minds. Wiser to seek and serve our best Friend first. But yet it is a melancholy truth; though a throne of grace is ever open; believers always acceptable thereto in Christ Jesus; and have the greatest encouragements to draw nigh to God; though they have many strong corruptions, many powerful lusts and sinful passions, which are ever ready to break out from within, that they should be so often beset with a backwardness to prayer. May we not justly charge many of the slips and miscarriages, sins and failings, the breakings-forth of our unholy tempers, to the neglect of this duty? How carefully oughtest thou, O soul, to begin the day with seeking the power of the Spirit to enable thee to mortify thy sins, and to live unto God. Thou complainest of deadness and barrenness of soul; who can enliven and make thee fruitful but the dear Lord whom thou neglectest to cry unto? If thine outward walk is a reproach unto thee, if the peace of thy mind is frequently ruffled and disturbed through want of grace and power from Jesus, doth not thy closet testify against thee, as too much neglected? May not this accusation be justly charged upon us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not?" James 4. 2. But our Beloved invites. His command is for our blessing. "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John 16. 24.

But ye have not so learned Christ ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. Eph. 4. 20, 21.

Jesus, the great prophet of his church, speaks to the hearts of his members. This is his superior excellence to all other prophets; for they can only speak to the ear. To attend a preached gospel is our constant duty: But all our profit and happiness arise from hearing the Saviour's voice to our souls. Under the outward ministry, inwardly to listen to the teachings of his Lord, should be every christian's concern. Many cry, O what an excellent preacher! what a charming sermon! But why? Didst thou hear Jesus speak? did he teach? hast thou heard somewhat from him? Thou knowest, disciple, though a Paul plants, though an Apollos waters, yet it is the Saviour's presence and power that gives the increase of faith, love, and peace.

So the Saviour is pleased to teach; so disciples love to learn. Then is it well with the soul; for it refuseth to act and walk after the course of this present evil world: for he says, the Saviour hath taught me better. Why does he take pains to teach me the love of his cross? Why hath he instructed me in the truths of his salvation? Why hath he made known to my poor heart the unsearchable riches of his grace; redemption in his blood; forgiveness of sin; acceptance with God, and peace and love from him? Do I possess "a good hope through grace," that as verily as Jesus now prays for me, so I shall shortly be where he is? After all this can I walk in the vanity of my mind? can I turn aside from the free-grace truths of the gospel, to have my teeth set on edge with the sour grapes of corrupt human systems? Canst thou ever think, disciple, that the liberty of the Spirit tends to licentiousness of the flesh, or that grace makes sin less hateful; or that a holy walk and obedient life doth not flow from the doctrines and teachings of our Saviour? Surely, thou must know, that as the work of Jesus' life and death was to justify sinners, so the teaching of his Spirit is to sanctify them; and surely if this is done inwardly on thy soul, it will be evidenced outwardly in thy life, in separating ones self (as a holy vessel, meet for the master's use) from all sensuality and uncleanness; in "putting off the old man with his deeds, and in serving our God and Saviour, "not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit." Thus will it appear that thou hast been with Jesus—hast learned of him, and that his teaching is spirit and life to thy soul.

Order my footsteps by thy word,
And make my heart sincere;

Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear.

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. Isa. 51. 11.

"A good word maketh the heart glad." Prov. 12. 25. This is true of the good word of gospel-grace. While the unscriptural notion of conditional grace and salvation dejects the spirits of sensible sinners; God's free-grace declarations, and absolute promises revive the hearts of contrite ones. Man's ifs, suppositions, and peradventures, tend to counteract God's shalls and wills, his gracious purposes and loving determinations. Where the word of a king is, there is power: "And who may say unto him, what dost thou?" Eccles. 8. 4. In the word of Jehovah there is almighty power. He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?" Dan. 4. 35.

I will, and you shall, is the stay, the strength, the food of faith. It is the joy of believing hearts, to set to their seal, and say, Amen, to be it, to God's free promises. The arm of the Lord, the strength of Jehovah, which hath done wonders of old, is not shortened that it cannot save; that is our mercy. It is, it ever will be stretched forth in power, (that is our comfort) till every redeemed soul is "returned to mount Zion, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, which are enrolled in heaven; and to God the judge of all; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." Heb. 12. 23.

All the objects of the Father's love, are the subjects of the Son's redemption, and shall be partakers of the Spirit's power and consolation. In returning to Jesus they shall find rest, and peace, and joy. By the sprinkling of his blood, sorrow and mourning flee away from their consciences. Then how sweetly, how joyfully do we sing the song of Moses! Exod. 15. 1. "The Lord is my strength and my song; he is become my salvation, &c." How comfortably do our souls join the triumphant song of the victorious Lamb, Rev. 1. 5.

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." What strong consolation, what full assurance is proclaimed from the mouth of the Lord! Every sentence contains a shall; not it may be, but it shall be. Sinners feel the power of grace, which melts hearts of stone into flesh. Saints feel the comfort of love, which turns mournful penitents into joyful souls. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 5. 18.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12. 14.

"He that believeth shall be saved." This is the immutable decree of the God of truth. But as no man shall see the Lord without holiness, so no man can be holy without faith in Jesus. But this is the peculiar blessedness of every believer, he is holy, he is "sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus." Acts 26. 18. Therefore such are "called to be saints," 1 Cor. 1. 2. called to holiness of life and conversation. There are no holy unbelievers, nor unholy believers. Gospel exhortations are suited to the spiritual state of regenerate souls. They are subjects of the Prince of peace; and, being at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as agreeable to their character, to the will of God, and to the peace of their own minds, they are ever to study and endeavour to follow peace with all men, consistent with faith and a good conscience. So of holiness: Being holy members of the holy Jesus—beloved children of a holy God—called by a holy gospel—partakers of a holy faith—heirs of a holy kingdom; therefore all the way of their journey thither they are exhorted to follow holiness. From partaking of the root of holiness, by union with Jesus, all the fruits of holiness spring. Christ is the way wherein we are to walk. Conformity to his image is the delight of new-born souls. But they are the subjects of a nature which is averse to it. Still they know that holiness and happiness are ever inseparable. Holiness is our vocation, our business, and it is ever to be our constant aim; not to recommend us to God, or procure his favour, or as a condition of our acceptance in his sight; but that we may glorify him "who hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Saints are not to indulge themselves on the bed of sloth, and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, and vainly wish to cast themselves out of Dalilah's lap of worldly pleasures, and sinful gratifications, into Abraham's bosom of heavenly joys; but we are exhorted studiously to avoid every thing which is contrary to the nature of true holiness; and ever to be diligent in the use of such means, which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, may increase our love of holiness, and cause us to abound in the practice of it. True, we have innumerable enemies from within and without to oppose our progress in holiness. So much the more need of diligence and activity. We know that the delicious fruits of happiness grow only in the paths of holiness, and the Lord's strength which is for us, is greater than all that is against us. Ever remember a throne of grace is always open to us; and we are exhorted to draw nigh to God with boldness. Great and precious promises are given us. All this is to encourage us "to serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives." Luke 1. 74, 75.

If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love : even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. John 15. 10.

Do any cast it in our teeth, and reproach us concerning our hope of eternal life, as if we do not expect it by free grace and promise only, but clogged with terms and conditions, which we must fulfil ; therefore say we are only dreaming legalists, under the legal yoke, and not Christ's free-men ? We answer, We not only talk of, but we enjoy Christ—we do not merely prate about faith, but we partake of its power—not only hear of love described, but we feel its influence—not barely look for salvation from sin, but we enjoy it by the faith of Jesus now, and we know that we shall partake of salvation with eternal glory : for he who never spoke one word in vain hath pronounced of all his members, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love.” And Jesus' loving heart is so set upon our being always happy, that he directs us how to act so as constantly to abide in the sweet sense of his love ; and also that we may enjoy still greater measures of it in our hearts. If ye keep my commandments, so it shall be with you.

Jesus ever abode in his Father's love ; this he manifested by doing the Father's will, and keeping his commandments. In his work of obedience he received this testimony from the Father, “This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” So Abraham had this blessed witness borne him by the Lord, “Now I know thou fearest God.” And also a repetition of the grand promise given him, upon the obedience of his faith. Gen. 22. 15—18.

So also shall disciples find the testimony of the comforting Spirit, in the way of keeping the commandments of Jesus. Though not for, yet “in keeping thy commandments there is great reward.” Psalm 19. 11. This David well knew by happy experience.

FAITH and LOVE are the commandments of Jesus. To believe in, rely upon, confide and trust in the Lord Jesus from hour to hour, this is to honour him—to love God, and one another, as his children, is the true badge of the disciples of the loving Saviour ; this is to obey him. The more LOVING FAITH and FAITHFUL LOVE to Jesus abide in our hearts, so much the more will peace, consolation, and joy be increased in our souls.

Do any deem this legality ? May the Lord God fill our hearts with such legality day by day ! so shall we be truly evangelised. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Col. 2. 6, 7.

The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. Psalm 45. 13.

Thus Jehovah, the sovereign Lord of all, who " calleth things that be not, as though they were," Rom. 4. 17. speaketh by his Spirit of his church. By the pen of the royal prophet, the Lord describes the beauty and glory of all her members. Thus they are viewed by God the Father, from all eternity, in Christ Jesus the heavenly Bridegroom. Thus are they beloved and chosen in him—" saved in the Lord Jesus with an everlasting salvation," Isa. 45. 17. within, all glorious; without, most richly clothed.

What the church is viewed from eternity, that each member is destined to, and shall be made in time. For the establishing and comfort of our faith and hope, which is in God, here is a sweet, a near and dear relation spoken of, and which ever subsists. The church is the King of glory's daughter, " the Lamb's wife," Rev. 21. 9. according to the immutable law of love, which, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, changeth not. Therefore she shall possess and enjoy her portion and dowry, which is designed for her. Though in herself she is black and deformed, yet is she most gloriously arrayed with the perfect comeliness which Jesus hath put upon her, Ezek. 16. 14. But she knows not of, nor glories in this outward clothing, till she is all glorious within. When the blessed Spirit hath quickened, and enlightened, and possessed the soul, of the rich graces of faith and love, then in a holy triumph of heavenly joy and ecstasy she cries out, " I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Isa. 61. 10.

Thus the righteousness, the perfect righteousness of Jesus is her clothing; like gold for its value and purity, like wrought gold, because wrought out by the life of Jesus, to the exact conformity of the perfect law. Her inward glory lies in the graces of the Holy Spirit in the hidden man of the heart. By the former, she has a title to glory; by the latter, she has evidence of interest in, and meetness for the kingdom. Thus faith's views are struck from the impression of the royal signet of God's word. Wo to licentious tongues, who would deprive the church of her inward glory and holiness. Wo to those hands of sacrilege, who would strip the church of her glorious robe of imputed righteousness. For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." Zechar. 2. 5, 8.

Again he limiteth a certain day, saying, To-day if ye will hear his voice. Heb. 4. 7.

No marvel, that among other devices of satan, to distress sinners, and cause them to despair of God's mercies in Christ Jesus, he urges this also, "Your day of grace is past; the time of your visitation is ended." Hence many poor souls have been drove to their wick end. And have not some preachers been so too, who have increased such persons fears, by speaking in a very unguarded and unscriptural manner on this point? But such are the effects of human systems, and free-will notions, with their offers of grace, their profers of mercy. I heard one declare; "This is the last offer, if it is not now accepted, eternal damnation will be the inevitable consequence;" as though thus preaching hell and damnation would make converts to Jesus. From such harsh, unwarrantable declarations, these unscriptural conclusions have been drawn by poor sensible sinners, "that they have withstood the offers of mercy, and their day of grace is for ever ended;" and that there is no place for repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears.

Most injurious thoughts of a God of love! most dishonourable thoughts of the most precious Jesus! Never was any sensible sinner half so willing to be saved from wrath, as Jesus was to suffer wrath for sinners. Never was any weary, heavy-laden sinner, half so willing to come to God by Christ, as God is to receive him. "The Lord is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3. 9. Therefore he hath limited a certain day—the day of gospel-light and salvation—the day of glad-tidings to poor sinners. In the day of his power, his people shall be willing to submit to Jesus' blood and righteousness; to come to his fest; claim him as their king, and submit to his laws and government. His voice of grace is first heard in his word: when that is believed in the heart, his voice of love is heard in the soul. While the gospel-sound is proclaimed, God's arms, and God's heart are open to sinners: his word assures, "the elect have obtained, and the rest were blinded;" Rom. 11. 7. But who blinds them? Not the God of love. No: "the god of this world blinds the eyes of those that believe not." 2 Cor. 4. 4. Who hardens them? Not a God of grace; "but their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." O! if any poor sinner's heart is soft and yielding to Jesus' love and salvation; "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." How long hath he waited to be gracious to thee! Remember thy past conduct with shame—think on thy present state with gratitude to the Lord—Look forward with joyful hope—be concerned "to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith thou art called." Eph. 4. 1.

And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. Psalm 39. 7.

What a blessing is inward composure of mind! How delightful an exercise is waiting upon the Lord! What a profitable privilege is prayer! How happy the soul whose hope is in God! These are all the sweet attendants upon and promoted by the grace of faith in Christ Jesus. While that grows and thrives in the soul, we are more lively and comfortable. Hence the disciple's petition, "Lord, increase our faith," is daily needful. Then is it well with the soul, when it is enabled to make this solemn appeal to its Saviour, "Thou knowest what I long for, what I wait for," even the spiritual blessings of thy kingdom—to be more inwardly transformed into thine image—to be more perfectly obedient to thy will—and to obtain a more complete victory over my worst foes, sin, Satan, and the world.

Verily the heavenly-instructed soul knows that all this is of God by Jesus Christ, and that the contrary to all this is from the lusts that dwell in him, and the evils that surround him: Therefore God alone is his hope. His hope is not in his graces, his feelings, his comforts, but in the God of all grace—not in the streams, but in the fountain—not in what he has received, but in the infinite fulness, which is treasured up in Jesus for the needy.

Thou man of God, consult not thy carnal reason; consider not thy body, which is dead because of sin: But know, that the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Though the law is weak through the flesh, yet grace reigns; and through gospel-grace thou hast innumerable great and precious promises to encourage thee to hope confidently, and the omnipotent power of the Spirit to work in thee, to make thee go on cheerfully, while Jesus is the stay of thine heart, to uphold and strengthen thee. Fear not; only believe; greater is Jesus than all thine enemies. "Stronger is he who is for us, than all that are against us." Verily thou shalt not be disappointed of thy hope, seeing it is in the Lord. Where Jesus is the object of faith, and the anchor of hope is cast within the veil, that soul shall safely and comfortably weather every storm.

My fainting flesh had dy'd with grief,
Had not my soul believ'd
To see thy grace provide relief,
Nor was my hope deceiv'd.

Wait on the Lord, ye trembling saints,
And keep your courage up;
He'll raise your spirit when it faints,
And far exceed your hope.

K And this is the way to the kingdom of glory

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe in me through their word. John 16/20.

What a rich fund of comfort is here for every believer in the Lamb! his loving heart was not contracted, nor his eyes of compassion confined to the little flock now with him; but he looked forward in love, his bowels of tender mercy yearned over, and his innocent tongue pleads in behalf of all the tender Lambs of his flock, through all succeeding ages, in every period of time. Yea, ere they had a being in the world, or faith in their hearts, they had an interest in Jesus' prayers, for they were given to him by the Father. Methinks one may hear some poor doubting member of Jesus saying, "Ah, if I was but sure my worthless name was written in the Lamb's book of life—if I could but know his heart of love was towards poor sinful me—that I was included in the happy catalogue of those Jesus prayed for—O how happy, how joyful should I be?" Here thy Lord has answered thy request. Read it for the joy of thy heart, and for the establishing thy soul in faith and love. Hast thou heard the apostolic truth, SALVATION BY JESUS CHRIST? Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ? If so, verily thou hast as much reason to conclude, Jesus prayed for thee, as though thy name was wrote at full length in this very petition. Jesus prays for "all them that shall believe in him through their word."

The whole of salvation is sure to all believers, even the weakest of all, from the covenant, from Jesus, from the Spirit, and from the oath and promises of God. Though there is a sea of corruption and sin in thy nature, a world of temptation around thee, legions of devils in battle-array against thy poor soul; yet if thou hast the faith of God's elect in thine heart, be it ever so weak, thou art possessed of a precious jewel, which is the inestimable gift of God's holy Spirit. And verily, as sure as Jesus prayed this prayer unto his Father on earth, so certainly shalt thou be brought to glory, to ascribe salvation to God and the Lamb, through the happy, happy ages of a never-ending eternity. For so is the righteous challenge of our Saviour, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." ver. 24.

He lives! he lives! and sits above,
For ever interceding there;
Who shall divide us from Christ's love,
Or what should tempt us to despair?

Faith has an overcoming pow'r,
It triumphs in the dying hour;
Christ is our life, our joy, our hope,
Nor can we sink with such a prop.

*I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence
cometh my help.* Psalm 121: 1.

The most comforting subject to a spiritual mind; the most delightful object to a spiritual eye, is "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The hills afford us a pleasing idea of Jesus. As they are elevated parts of the same earth with the lowest valley; so Jesus "made himself of no reputation; was found in fashion as a man; took on him the same nature, and was in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted." Wherefore "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name;" Phil. 2. 9. even the precious name JESUS the Saviour. We can never dwell too much upon the human form, and humble appearance of Jesus, while we entertain the most exalted ideas of his eternal power and Godhead; "for he bore our sins, and carried our sorrows;" all our help is laid upon him—all our hope is in him—and our help from him. And for the encouragement of faith, his word assures us of his love towards sinners, and his power to help them.

What is our chief business on earth but to glorify God? what our daily work, but "to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life?" This is our calling: the light of another day is vouchsafed us. But whither shall we turn our eyes, but where enemies surround us on every side? Yea, from within as well as without. And can we experience safety, or walk in comfort, but while our eyes are up to Jesus?

The fight of sin that dwelleth in us, causes dejection—looking to our own righteousness and fancied excellence, begets pride and vain confidence—the subtilty of a malicious spirit, "the prince of the power of the air," is enough to make one tremble. This present evil world, with its honours, profits and pleasures, is exactly suited to our carnal nature. Who can withstand its smiles, renounce its carnal children, and bear their reproaches? who is proof against these potent adversaries? Verily, with all knowledge received, all inherent grace, all past experience, we shall not be able to stand, if we are not continually lifting up our eyes to Jesus; he only is our present help. Glory to God, his children are kept by his mighty power to salvation—but let us remember it is through Christ's exalting FAITH. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

To heav'n I lift my waiting eyes;
There all my hopes are laid.

The Lord that built the earth and skies,
Is my perpetual aid,

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. Col. 4. 6.

"There shall not an hoof be left behind," said meek Moses to the stubborn monarch. All that belonged to God's children must go with them for his service. So the whole man, soul with all its faculties; body with all its members, Jesus claims for his glory and service. The tongue, though but a little member—words though but as wind—speech, though but as sound—yet the name, the work, the love, the glory of Jesus is hereby greatly advanced in the world. As salt not only preserves from putrefaction, but seasons flesh with an agreeable flavour and relish; so doth grace in the heart the speech.

Why to a heart warm with the love of Jesus, and alive to his glory, is the vain conversation of carnal company so disagreeable? Truly, the christian is out of his element. He fears getting harm: An embargo is laid on his tongue. It is his glory to shun, rather than seek such company. If through connections in life he cannot totally refrain their company, it is his wisdom to restrain his speech: "To keep his mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before him, that he sin not with his tongue." Psalm 39. 1. But always to season his speech by the grace of Jesus, to the glory of his name.

But when saints meet, what should be the end of their conversation but Jesus? Grace, the free favour of God in him to poor sinners, should ever be the delightful subject: The glorious doctrines of Grace, through Christ, their perfect consistency and blessed tendency. The comfortable work of grace from Jesus upon their own souls; how begun, carried on, and how it is with them now: But by no means to catch applause, as though they were not in themselves poor sinners, hanging upon and hoping in Jesus from day to day. The precious promises of Grace in Christ Jesus, how immutable and establishing? The salvation of grace by Jesus, how unconditional and certain to every believer?

Confessing on such subjects, how savory and relishing! Speech thus seasoned, how becoming and profitable to gracious hearts! When it is not so it is a sad sign that the soul is like salt that has lost its flavour, and calls for great searchings of heart: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Mark 9. 49.

In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. Jer. 33. 16.

Before days begun or years were numbered, in the book of God's election were all the members of Jesus written, "which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them." Psalm 139. 13. God's electing love would have remained an eternal secret to us had not the Spirit of truth made it known: But, as it is revealed in the word, it is an object of our faith, and ever will be the subject of glorying and triumph to all who possess the faith of God's elect; for this is a blessed evidence, that "God hath chosen them in Christ, before the foundation of the world." Eph. 1. 4. Was the man Jesus, God the Father's "elect, in whom his soul delighteth?" Isa. 42. 1. So are all his members; loved with the same love as the head. God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Jesus, the glorified head of the church; but every member receives the Spirit through Jesus, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Eph. 4. 7.

Unspeakably glorious, distinguishing grace! This is the rejoicing of simple-hearted, believing souls: They are beloved and chosen by God the Father, and partake of the same Spirit with Jesus: Yea, and are also called by the same name with Jesus. Is Christ called "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?" Jer. 33. 6. So the church, the Lamb's wife, being married in faith and love, she is called by the same name with her Lord and Husband; she shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS also. Jer. 33. 16.

Angels wonder! Saints admire! O ye righteous, how astonishing is this! Ye, who by nature are children of wrath! Ye, who by practice have been rebels and transgressors from the womb! Yet exalted by Jesus to such an high and glorious state. Amazing love! ye can never, never enough dwell upon the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's vocation. Glorious days of gospel light and love! While others are left wretched in nature's pride, free-will boast, and self-righteous glorying, ye not only may, but SHALL be saved by free-grace truth—ye SHALL dwell safely; for God your Father's justice is satisfied, his law is fulfilled, your enemies are all conquered, God is at peace with you: What then can harm you? for "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about his people, from henceforth, even for ever." Psalm 125. 2.

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
2 John, ver. 8.

The salvation of God's people is certain, by his immutable love. Their safety depends on his almighty power—their confidence and glorying is in the finished work of Jesus—and their comforts are enjoyed from the Spirit's testimony of the Saviour to their hearts; as having loved, redeemed, and saved lost, guilty, and perishing sinners. The clearer views we have of this truth, so much the more do we cleave to Jesus. As our faith increases, our comforts are strengthened; and this is the touchstone of a gracious heart; the comforts of love ever excite to care and circumspection in life and practice. A glimpse of Jesus begets longing after more comfortable enjoyment of him. So also, a holy jealousy of soul, lest what is gained should be lost in sense and enjoyment; while surrounded by false teachers—exposed to unscriptural doctrines—beset by a subtle adversary—and so nearly allied to corrupt lusts and carnal reasonings, we are ever in danger of losing sight of free-grace truths, gospel love, and the finished salvation of Jesus; so as to be moved away from the hope of the gospel; for this is the spring of action, the life of obedience, the source of encouragement to persevere in the path of truth and holiness: What thanks are due to the loving Spirit for this wholsome advice? How much concerned should we be daily to improve it? Look to yourselves—see your danger—your weakness. Look up to Jesus for safety and strength. Blessed by the God we serve, he is not unrighteous to forget our works of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love. We enjoy his reward in our work, though not for our work: let Jesus have all that glory. Still the more work, the more sufferings for his sake, so much the more reward: of just debt to him; of righteous grace to us.

Would we avoid sorrowful complaints of loss? Are we solicitous to rejoice in present gain, and in hope of a future full reward? "Therefore, my brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15. 58.

Songs of immortal praise belong
To my almighty God;
He has my heart and he my tongue,
To spread his name abroad.

To fear thy pow'r, to trust thy grace;
Is our divinest skill;
And he's the wisest of our race,
That best obeys thy will.

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.
Jer. 15. 16.

That is a sweet petition in the service of the church of England; 'Grant, O Lord, that we may not only hear, read, mark and learn, but inwardly digest the holy scriptures.' As soon as the Lord hath fulfilled this prayer upon any poor sinner, then Jesus is the hope of his soul—he esteems the scriptures as his daily food—the doctrines of grace are the joy and rejoicing of his heart—and he will love and attend such prophets of the Lord, who have also "found God's words and have eat them."

Thus glory to our loving Shepherd, he finds his sheep scattered and starving upon the barren mountains, and he leads them to green pastures of gospel-grace and love: there they feed and lie down beside the still waters of peace and salvation. For this heightens every comfort, and improves every joy, even an inward testimony: "I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." O, when minister or disciple is able, in simplicity and godly sincerity, to make this appeal, "Thou hast called me." Thou, Jehovah, who rulest over the armies of angels, and arch-angels, and all the heavenly host, thou hast condescended to make known thy name, thy grace, thy salvation to me, even wretched me. I hear thy voice—I know thy voice—I feel desires after thee—my heart thinks of thee with pleasure and delight—I find an hungry and thirsting within me, which nothing but thy blessed self can satisfy—I am grieved when I offend thee—only happy when thy love and presence is enjoyed—and am concerned that I enjoy no more of it. This is my heaven below; this my expected heaven above. So feeding upon the word of truth, increases desires after Jesus the object of faith. So also the soul becomes dead to the life of sense, the intrusions of sin, the allurements of the world, and the baits of Satan.

Thus happy those in whom the word of Christ dwells richly in all wisdom. Happy those in whom Christ dwells in their hearts by faith.

The volume of my Father's grace
Does all my griefs assuage;
Here I behold my Saviour's face,
Almost in ev'ry page.

O may thy counsels, mighty God!
My roving feet command:
Nor I forsake the happy road,
That leads to thy right hand.

And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. 3. 23.

St. Paul seems to ransack heaven and earth, time and eternity, to make up the christian's rich catalogue of mercies. But, as though the utmost stretch of thought, of men or angels, might omit some part of the believer's treasure; and lest, at any time, any thing should be found wanting for support and comfort, to any needy soul, he twice repeats, "All things are yours."

And now, believer, wouldst thou know thy title? wouldst thou inquire, Whence is it the Lord should consign such innumerable blessings, such intimately rich mercies to us? Whereas one thing we know, we feel daily we are sinners to this very hour. And will not this prevent the right to possession, and the freedom of enjoyment? No: Justice and wisdom conspire to take away this and every objection. The medium of communication is such, that neither reason, law nor equity, can gainsay.

Dwell on this point; look up to the Spirit of truth, that it may establish faith, strengthen hope, increase love, and promote joy. "Ye are Christ's," by special gift; his dear purchase, and his precious reward: therefore we have all in him by rich love, peculiar grace, free gift, and precious promises. Precious faith is the blessed evidence of interest, and propriety in this blessed inventory. But how came faith? From hearing the word of God. From whom came the word? By the Spirit of truth, who also gives faith. Why is the Spirit given? Because Jesus is glorified. Wherefore came Jesus to seek and save the lost? The Father loved us, and gave his Son for us. Do we inquire, Why the Father loved us? It was "the good pleasure of his will, according to which he chose us, in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world; predestinated us to the adoption of children, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him," Eph. 1. 3, 4, 5. Hence, O believer, how clear thy title! how certain thy possessions!

"Christ is God's;" God's beloved Son, so art thou in him. Christ is God's gift for thee, God's gift to thee, and thou to him. Thou enjoyest all in him, and receivest all from him. Canst thou ever want food for faith, a source of love, a fountain of holiness, or a spring of consolation? What have we done? or what could we do to get an interest in Christ, or procure a right to such heavenly treasures? Verily we have done enough to forfeit, but nothing to deserve them. Know this and be humbled; consider this and be joyful in love: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 5. 18.

Thy Maker is thine husband. Isa. 54. 5.

All marriages are, or ought to be, founded in mutual love between the contracting parties. This is the chief ingredient to produce happiness in the conjugal state: Where this is wanting, there is seldom much comfort enjoyed. When a person of noble birth and great fortune marries a woman poor in circumstances, and involved in debt, we justly conclude he chose her out of pure love and affection to her person. And surely such an one is under the most endearing obligations to love, affection, and chastity. She can never call to mind her former indigent state, and her present affluent circumstances, but it must tend to inflame her with the most ardent affection to her husband.

This is somewhat the case between Christ and his church. Pure love in the heart of the heavenly Bridegroom caused him to betroth his church unto himself, in loving kindness. Though she was in the most abject state and despicable condition, yet he secretly loved her person from eternity, and openly espoused every member in time of conversion, one by one. So saith St. Paul, 2 Cor. 11. 2. "I have espoused you to one husband, Christ."

Can'st thou, O believer, call to mind thy natural state of poverty and distress—over head and ears in debt—writs issued from the law, which justice might have executed—liable every moment to be cast into prison, where thou must have perished with nothing but rags, filthy rags, to hide thy shame and cover thy nakedness? Can'st thou think of this without humility? And dost thou now see the kindness and love of thine husband? Has he paid all thy debts? cancelled every bond? put in a plea against every accusation, and perfectly fulfilled the holy law, and satisfied divine justice? Art thou "blessed with all spiritual blessings" in thine Husband? enriched with heavenly treasures? hath he "clothed thee with the garments of salvation, and adorned thee with "the robe of his righteousness?" and doth God thy Father say of thee, "Thou art all fair, my love; I see no spot in thee?" Cant. 4. 7.

O what purity of affection! what ardency of love! what chastity of behaviour is due to such a lover, to such an husband? Christ took thee at first "for better, for worse;" his love to thee is ever the same; affectionate and constant; full of complacency and delight; sympathizing with thy troubles; ever nourishing and cherishing thee here. Shortly the Lamb will in the most open and public manner appear as the Bridegroom of his church, and celebrate the marriage in a blissful eternity, when it shall be said, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Rev. 19. 7.

Jesus said, One thing is needful. Luke 10. 42.

The disposition and carriage of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, much resembles the different desires and actings of the flesh and spirit, of which every christian is composed. The flesh, like Martha, is careful and troubled about many things: it is ever restless and uneasy; always in want; seldom satisfied; never truly happy. But the spirit hath chose that good part, that one thing needful: It is truly wise in its choice; quite satisfied in its object, and truly happy in its enjoyment.

Thus it is while the christian is under the prevailing influence of this one thing needful. One thing, the enjoyment of God, was our first parents paradise. A thirst after, and enjoyment of two things (the knowledge of evil as well as good) caused all their woe, and made them miserable. And 'tis the knowledge of the former which keeps all his posterity under the sad circumstances they are fallen into, till they are brought to know the one thing needful: What is this but the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? This was the great apostle's continual prayer, "That I may know HIM." This was what Mary was happy in the enjoyment of, and what our Lord himself comments her for; and calls that good part which shall never be taken away.

This one thing comprehends all wisdom, holiness, and happiness; to know Jesus is to believe in him; to believe on him is to love him; and to love him is to keep his commandments. In every station, in all seasons, and under every circumstance this one thing, this knowledge of Jesus, is ever needful, ever seasonable. Doth the christian enjoy health? This knowledge joins to health of body, peace and joy of soul. Is he in sickness? To know Jesus is the richest cordial, the most reviving draught to his soul. Is he tempted? What consolation is it to know Jesus was in all things tempted, that he might succour the tempted. Does death, the king of terrors, affright him? By the knowledge of Jesus he is disarmed of his strength and sting; which is the law and sin. So that through the knowledge of Jesus, O soul, thou mayest take up this triumphant challenge against the last enemy, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

On earth we want the fight

Of our Redeemer's face;

Yet, Lord, our inmost thoughts delight

To dwell upon thy grace.

And when we taste thy love,

Our joys divinely grow

Unspeakable, like those above;

And heaven begins below.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not ; for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. Exod. 20. 28.

Pride and self-confidence are deeply rooted in the human heart. False hopes are built on self-righteous pleas. By these the heart is blinded to the exceeding sinfulness of sin ; hardened against the fear and dread of the Lord ; and such live in rebellion against the truth as in Jesus. Like Paul, we are naturally alive without the law. So, with these Israelites of old, are ready to say, " All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Exod. 19. 8.

Alas ! poor souls utter such words of ignorance and pride, when, like the disciples on the mount, " They know not what they say." But whom the Lord loves, he proves. The Lord is a jealous God : he will suffer no flesh to glory in his presence ; nor shall his dear children live without his fear, and a holy hatred of pride and sin. Therefore they must go out of their tents of vain confidence.

When the Lord discovers himself in glory and majesty, as a holy, sin-avenging God ; when the law, in its holy, just and righteous demands, is revealed in the conscience, it makes the stoutest heart to tremble, and fills the guilty, self-accused sinner with fear and horror. Yea, he would, if left to his own dreadful apprehensions, fly from God, and sink into black despair without hope : but the dear Mediator is ever near and prevents this : he speaks in love, " Fear not."

This dispensation is not to destroy your soul, but to kill your vain hopes—to prove and try you—and shew you what is in you. That you may be dead to the law, be alive to God by a better hope, through the faith of me your Jesus. So fear the Lord with a loving fear, as to die to sin. Thunders of wrath, terrible peals of curses are sometimes necessary to be heard in the conscience ; they fulfil God's will. The bleak north wind of the law kills the vermine of nature ; while the warm, comforting south wind of the gospel, cherishes and enlivens the seeds of grace.

Thus the Spirit humbles proud hearts, revives contrite spirits, endears Christ, who hath endured the curses we have deserved, and embitters sin to believing penitent souls. " Lo, all these things worketh God, oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Job 33. 29.

The law discovers guilt and sin,
And shews how vile our hearts have been.
Only the gospel can express
Forgiving love, and cleansing grace.

My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law :
Fly to the hope the gospel gives ;
The man that trusts the promise lives.

Knowing, that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 2 Pet.

I. 14.

Nothing but the life of Jesus, manifested in our flesh, can reconcile us to death. This, and this only, delivers us from the fears of death, disarms it of its sting, and fortifies the mind with the knowledge of complete victory over the king of terrors, "through him that hath loved us." Constant converse with Jesus makes death familiar to the soul. So we learn to die daily—for the spiritual immortal life of the soul triumphs over the sensual mortal life of the body—the happy spirit in some highly-favoured seasons, is so far from fearing and trembling at the body's dissolution, that it rejoices, and even longs to be set at liberty from its imprisoned state—it pants with desires after its Beloved; and says, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" It wants

To clap its glad wings and tow'r away,

And mingle with eternal day.

How sweet is it to live in such a frame! how desirable! how daily and earnestly to be sought for! That when the frail body is attacked with any sickness, the soul may ask, with great serenity, in the language of John Baptist to Jesus, "Art thou he?" Is this disorder to put the finishing stroke to all my trials and griefs? "or must I look for another?"

All men know they must die; and they frequently confess this; but the thoughts of it are irksome to them. Believers in Jesus only have a peculiar knowledge of death, so as to dwell on the thought, that it will come shortly, that it is nigh at hand, with satisfaction, hope and comfort. Jesus hath shewed them this. From him "the righteous hath hope in his death," Prov. 14. 32.

Is it in vain then, thinkest thou, the Saviour saith, "Forfake all; take up thy cross; follow me?" No: it verily is for the profit, the peace, the consolation of the soul; for the more stedfastly we are attached, and the more eagerly we pursue the things of this present life, by so much the more are we loth to die; fear its approach; tremble at the very apprehension of the unwelcome messenger. And all this is, because the objects of time and sense cloud our minds, and darken our views of the victorious Jesus, his perfect work and finished salvation for us. And it is only while Jesus is embraced in the arms of faith, the soul is enabled to say, with blessed Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Luke 2. 29, 30.

That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations. Luke 24. 47.

This is the method of God's saving sinners by Jesus Christ. Those who know the preciousness of Christ, and have a regard to the glory of God, and love for immortal souls, make this the rule of their preaching: for this doctrine, where it is known and experienced in the heart, makes a true christian. Evangelical repentance is an evidence of a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and an understanding heart. To see the evil nature and dreadful effects of sin—its punishment in the sufferings of Jesus—to hear the curses and condemnation of the law against sinners—its dreadful thunders and menaces in the conscience—to understand in the heart that nothing but the blood of Jesus could atone for the guilty—none but he could fulfil the perfect demands of a holy law. This humbles the soul—cuts off false hopes—lays it low in self-abasement before Jehovah—causes it to cry out, "I am the man, the sinner I, who am cursed by law, exposed to wrath, deserving hell: I mourn without hope in myself: I hear of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners: I turn to him for hope and salvation: Sin has destroyed me: Jesus save, or I perish."

This repentance Jesus is exalted to give. This makes a proud sinner humble. Remission of sins makes a poor sinner a happy soul. Hath Christ obtained remission of sins by his blood? hath he commanded this should be preached in his name? is he exalted to give it? hath he brought the poor sinner, by his Spirit, to his feet to sue for it? and will he refuse to make the soul happy in the sense of it? Never, never, let such a thought be indulged by any poor sensible sinner. We read no such hard lines in his word. We can find no such dejecting views from his life and death. The doctrine he prescribed is a lively transcript of what was in his loving heart.

Be assured, O soul, there shall be a performance of all things that are promised of the Lord, to him that believeth; the same Jesus who gives the soul the humbling view of itself, and by repentance, to turn to him, will give it the rejoicing knowledge of himself, by the remission of sins, through faith in his blood.

Bless is the man to whom the Lord

Imputes not his iniquities;

He pleads no merit of reward,

And not on works, but grace relies,

From guilt his heart and life are free;

His humble joy, his holy fear,

With deep repentance well agree;

And join to prove his faith sincere.

How glorious is that righteousness,

That hides and cancels all our sins;

While a bright evidence of grace,

Thro' his whole life appears and shines.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Acts 26. 19.

One is sometimes called to bear testimony before unbelievers of the hope that is in one. It is difficult to speak of the manifestation of Christ to the heart, so that the Saviour alone may be exalted and glorified. Somewhat of self naturally creeps into the relation. It is very pleasing to nature, to be thought that we have been highly favoured, and have made great attainments in christianity. O that single letter, with great sound, I. It was farthest from the heart of that eminent champion for free-grace salvation, Paul, to give the least encouragement from his conversion, to any fellow-sinner to talk of obedience to God's will, or faithfulness to his grace, as the conditions of salvation. How would the soul of that man of God have been fired with a holy zeal for his Master's glory, was he on earth in our day, to hear his language abused, his meaning perverted, by the pride of men? Such as from self-righteous principles oppose the truths of the gospel; who deny God's unconditional election, unmerited love, the finished salvation of Jesus, and its being sure to all the seed, through the sovereign application of the Lord the Spirit.

Paul was favoured with an extraordinary vision from the Lord Jesus from heaven, to call him to be a faithful servant to Jesus. Obedient hearts are caused by effectual calls. But after Paul had laboured more abundantly than all the rest of the apostles, what was his glorying? "Yet not I, but the grace of God; striving (says he) according [to what? my ability? no,] to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Col. 1. 29. O here is a blessed pattern, a profitable lesson of humility set before us! Hath Jesus appeared to us in the vision of faith by the word of truth? Hath he effectually called us to believe in his name, and to rejoice in his salvation? What shall we say, but fall upon the bended knees of our hearts, and in warmest gratitude of soul adore grace, rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace! Have we been, and do we still continue obedient to the heavenly vision? Shall we sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag; and say, because of my obedience, my faithfulness? God forbid! for this is only grace upon grace. If we have obtained grace to be faithful, the comfort is ours; all the glory is due to the giver.

Since I have learn'd thy holy ways,
I've walk'd upright before thy face:
Or if my foot did e'er depart,
Twas never with a wicked heart.
Could I so false, so faithless prove,
To quit thy service and thy love?

Where, Lord, could I thy presence shun,
Or from thy dreadful glory run?

O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain upon the earth. Hosea 6. 3.

There is a sweet fellowship in the truth, in the hearts of disciples. Hence they are mutually helpful and encouraging to each other in the faith. The Saviour loves to have it so. He will bless them, and manifest himself to them in this way. So it was with the disciples after his crucifixion and death. They resorted together and communed with each other; and Jesus, though unknown to them at first, joined company with them, expounded the scriptures to them, opened their understandings; and they said one to another, "Did not our hearts burn within us, as he talked with us by the way, &c?" Luke 24. 32.

So the disciples of the Old-Testament church exhorted one another in faith, "We shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord." So it seems the words should be rendered. Those who know a little of Jesus' love, and are but just brought to be acquainted with his free-grace and salvation, shall hold on their way. Knowledge, light, peace and love shall increase to their souls, through that Spirit, by whom they are regenerated and born again. Though at first they are "as babes in Christ, yet, through the milk of the word, they shall grow and increase with the increase of God." The going-forth of the love of Jesus towards us, shall be as the morning. As at the dawn of day, light is scarce discernible, and seems opposed by surrounding darkness, yet it gradually increases till the sun gains its meridian. So shall "the path of the just shine more and more unto the perfect day."

The sun never forsakes the earth, though at seasons, its light and heat seem withdrawn in comfort and enjoyment. Thus is it with the sun of righteousness. He shall also "come unto us as the rain," to refresh, enliven, and make our souls fruitful in knowledge, peace, love and holiness; yea, as "the latter and former rain."

In the land of Israel, they had usually two rains in a year, one just after the seed was sown, the other when the corn was almost ripe, and the harvest just at hand. Sometimes just after the seed of eternal life is sown in the hearts of young converts, what joyful refreshing seasons of love and joy are they favoured with! Their "hearts are filled with laughter, and their tongue with joy." Others experience the most plentiful showers of heart-reviving love, just as the sickle is to cut them down, that they may be gathered in to the heavenly garner. The heavenly Husbandman knows best what seasons to give, whether the storm of affliction, the rain of prosperity, or the sunshine of joy. This is our mercy. "Jesus is a God of judgment. Blessed are all they that wait for him." Isa. 30. 18.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Psalms 51. 17.

It is the wisdom and joy of disciples to see somewhat of Jesus in every page of the lively oracles. Then the word is searched with pleasure, studied with delight, and is made exceeding profitable to the soul. To this end the sins and backslidings, the humiliations and repentings, the joys and experiences of saints of old are recorded. We see their deserts to be the lowest hell: but grace reigns. Though sin abounded in them, yet grace superabounded over them. But all is through Jesus; no grace, no favour, no mercy for sinful man, but through that dear Man and blessed Mediator.

So he glorifies his name, so he makes known his power to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," in saving his people from their sins. Though sin may blind the eyes to his love, and harden the heart against his fear, and the spirit become stout and rebellious for a season; yet see his amazing love—behold the effects of his grace! A cruel, murdering, adulterous David [beloved] shall be arraigned, plead guilty, sue for mercy, and hope for pardon. But did a broken spirit and a contrite heart intitle him to this? Were his present griefs and humiliations to atone for his past transgressions? No: alas, if he had no other hope than this, horror and black despair would have been the portion of his sensible blacksliding soul. Yet God will not, doth not, cannot despise, abhor or reject poor, broken-hearted, contrite souls. For his Spirit effects this in them. Though no plea is founded in this, yet the soul is sweetly encouraged hereby to hope; because the Lord hath not given up such to a reprobate mind. Still he works in them. They feel the effects. A sense of guilt is dreadful to be borne, distressing to feel; therefore they cry for deliverance: "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation."

A loving Lord breaks the heart for sin; though sin cannot break the covenant of his love: therefore sin shall not reign unto death. A contrite spirit flies from the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, and cannot rest till former joys are restored; and is also solicitous about his future walk, lest he fall again: therefore cries, "Uphold me with thy free Spirit." Ver. 12.

I cannot live without thy light,
Cast out and banish'd from thy sight:
Thine holy joys, my God, restore,
And guard me, that I fall no more.

O may thy love inspire my tongue!
Salvation shall be all my song;
And all my powers shall join to bless
The Lord, my strength, and righteousness.

Are ye not yet carnal and walk as men ? 1 Cor. 3. 3.

The phrase "carnal saints," some have looked on as a very opprobrious term, as though contradictory to the character of a real christian. But such persons differ in judgment from an inspired apostle. Paul calls these Corinthian converts, "Babes in Christ;" though he says to them, "Ye are yet carnal." Yea he appeals to their judgments: "Are ye not so?" Doth not your walk, your words, your strife, your views, give sad evidence of the truth of my assertion? do you not act and behave too much like men who are strangers to Jesus, and the life and power of vital godliness?

Believers are a compound of flesh and spirit. The new created soul dwells in a sinful body, and is opposed by a sinful nature. There may be true grace within, though much carnality appears without. Weak faith in Jesus, though it be opposed with strong corruptions and unbelief—a little true knowledge of Jesus in the heart, but beset with great ignorance and weakness of judgment—the dawning of true hope in Jesus, but interposed with clouds of darkness—the stirrings of real love to Jesus, but resisted by the love of the world, and the objects of sense—a real esteem for a preached-gospel, and yet carnal contentions, and debates may arise about ministers and things of no real profit to the soul. This is true. Such weaklings in the faith, such babes in Christ, are as safe, because beloved by the same Father—redeemed by the same precious blood of Jesus—and renewed by the power of the same Spirit, as the young men and fathers in Christ; but they are not so happy—they do not glorify God so much—they do not bring forth so much fruit to God, nor so greatly adorn the gospel of Jesus, as such who are strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and more established in the faith and love of him.

But let not such discourage their hearts, nor entertain hard thoughts of our loving master Jesus, as though he expected to reap where he has not sown. Let them not burden their weak minds with things that are too strong, nor exercise their tender hearts with matters that are too high; but simply considering Jesus—looking to the Lamb of God—confessing their weakness at his feet—praying to him for strength—studying his word for knowledge—"as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." "For those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God." Psalm 92. 13. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isa. 41. 10.

The wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death. Prov. 13. 32.

“O it is the most comfortable thing, in a dying hour, to look back upon a well-spent life,” say many. It is most comfortable to “forget the things that are behind, and to look forward, and press towards the mark of the prize of our high-calling of God in Christ Jesus,” saith the christian, Phil. 3. 14. What a delightful prospect to view a reconciled God, a glorified Jesus, and a kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world! For if we have not experienced a life of faith on Jesus, and by the grace of God have had our conversation in the world, a life of self-righteousness will only beget vain confidence, and delude the soul with false hopes, which will end in an awful disappointment. For sin is con-natural with our very being; it blinds the eyes, it perverts the judgment; or men would never think of placing any hope in themselves, in any thing they can do to make themselves righteous, or to make their peace with God. That is a gift of new-covenant love, called the gift of righteousness: “It cometh upon all the children of faith by one, Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5. 17. The christian despairs of any hope in and from his own righteousness. The spring of hope ariseth from faith. The righteousness of faith, is the righteousness of our dear Mediator Jesus. In him we are righteous—in him is all our hope, in life, in death, and in the tremendous day of judgment.

The righteous man is of divine extraction; born again from above: he hath the mind of Christ, he loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity. Hence the righteous hath hope in a God of justice—hope in a God of truth—hope in a God of faithfulness, because his hope standeth in God’s own covenant-grace and love, revealed to sinners in his own word through Jesus. This hope shall never forsake the righteous: It animates him in life to love and obedience—it comforts him in death against the fear of wrath and terror of hell—it inspires him with the joyful expectation of a crown of righteousness in life and immortality, according to the free-grace, precious promises of God, through the righteousness of Jesus.

Well might that eminently faithful minister of Jesus, the late Rev. Mr. Hervey, so sweetly fall asleep, with this hope in his heart, while his lips were warbling his dying-song, ‘Precious salvation! precious salvation!’—O precious grace! precious promises! precious faith! precious hope! All flowing to poor sinners, through the perfect righteousness and precious blood of the infinitely and eternally precious Jesus. Well might St. Paul sum up all our blessedness in that apostolic benediction, which includes all our hope: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. 2 Cor. 13. 14.

The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer. 1 Pet. 4. 7.

The word of grace and truth, like a judicious physician for the body, prescribes different recipes for the soul: Sometimes the bitter draught of affliction; at others the strengthening, comforting balsam of faith, with the restorative mixture of love; but at all times a necessary regimen, whereby to rule and govern our lives, that our souls may prosper and be in good health.

To use means in faith is our bounded duty: To neglect them is a contempt of the wise Prescriber; whereby we shall suffer loss, and receive hurt to our souls. As faith binds the soul to Jesus in the sweet bands of love, so it produces a conformity to him in heart and life. As the spirit enriches the soul with these precious graces, so they are accompanied with his transforming influence. But he ever directs to the word he has inspired, that we may be taught to avoid those things contrary thereto; and also to practise those duties which have a native tendency to strengthen the soul in persevering in holiness and truth.

An intemperate thirst after, and inordinate indulging ourselves in the enjoyment of any of the good creatures of this life, sadly indispose the mind to spiritual concerns. This is contrary to the life of faith—interrupts sweet communion with the Father of spirits—deadens the heart to holy fellowship with Jesus—and opposeth the comforting consolations of the blessed Spirit. Hence the soul finds great languors, deadness, and formality in its addresses to the throne of grace. Most needful, therefore, to consider, time, how short! Eternity, how near! The judge is at the door: All things are on the point of dissolution: I am expecting the messenger to call me hence.

Since continuance here is so uncertain; all worldly enjoyments so precarious, and perish in the using; what temperance, what sobriety of conduct becomes one? But this is certain, Jesus, with his much incense, is ever before the throne. It is a mercy-seat, sprinkled with his precious blood. Hence all grace is bestowed; all power given. O may we be concerned to watch continually against the motions of the enemy—the stirrings of pride and lust! watching in prayer for the power of the Spirit—watching after prayer for an answer of peace. And when, disciple, is the time that this exercise may be omitted? Verily, not till faith is lost in sight—hope is turned into enjoyment—and prayer is lost in praise.

He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. Psalm 23. 3.

With gratitude and joy, every believer has daily cause to address his soul in the words, spoken to Naomi, at the birth of Obed, "Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, redeemer, whose name is famous in Israel, who shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life." Ruth 4. 15. To the glory of Jesus be it ever remembered in the heart, that life once received from him, can never be lost : The soul once quickened from a death in trespasses and sins, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over it. For it is delivered from the cause of death, sin. Partaking of the life of grace from Jesus, sin has no more dominion over it, to kill and destroy it.

But though the soul enjoys life in Jesus, yet sin is not dead ; but dwelleth in us ; it worketh in the members, and opposeth the life, peace and comfort of the new-born soul. Is there a day passeth but we find that the old man is still alive ? Yea, at times, the soul is so pressed above measure, that it almost despairs of life. It seems to sense and experience, as though the sentence of death was executed. O how then doth Jesus again revive and restore it ! Sin often brings death upon the comforts of the soul, though it cannot touch its life ; that is secure in the life-giving Head : "it is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3. 3. Believers shall never sin themselves beyond the extent of Christ's love, nor beyond the reach of his power to restore them.

The precious blood of Jesus is sufficient to atone and wash away all sin, innumerable sins, sins of the deepest dye. See then the exceeding sinfulness of sin, in the most exceeding precious fountain that is opened for its cleansing. See the love and care of the faithful Shepherd, in restoring his wandering sheep. But know, O soul, whenever thou deviates from the path of Jesus, or backslides into sin, thou turnest thy back upon thy best Friend, thy kindest Lord, thou joinest thyself to his implacable foes. True, so unchangeable is the love of Jesus, he will restore the souls of his members ; but love mingles bitter potions to do this. And the most bitter of all is, thou sinnest against the richest grace and most precious love that ever was known. Love that has followed, and will follow thee all thy days. Love that will heal thy backslidings, and restore thy soul. Love that will lead thee in the paths of righteousness to salvation and glory. When thou rememberest this, thou wilt be ashamed and confounded for all that thou hast done ; and love him who doth all for his name's sake freely.

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Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that thro' death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Heb. 2. 15.

We read of one who was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it. With what propriety may a christian judge of himself, that he is born again to behold the glory, and delight himself in daily contemplating Jesus the sun of righteousness? Lord, thou shalt never stoop to that mean office of "washing my feet," said honest-hearted Peter. But what was that stoop of abasement, when Jesus was in the flesh, compared to his taking flesh upon him? Be astonished, O heavens! rejoice, O children of faith! admire, adore, what you can never fully comprehend, that the Lord of life and glory should take your nature, be clothed with flesh and blood, become a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. See Jesus—consider Jesus. On his humbling himself dwell in contemplation, till it warms the heart with love.

He took part with "the children." Such was Jacob's delight in Benjamin, that "his life was bound up in the lad's life." Gen. 44. 30. The soul of Jonathan was so knit to David, that "he loved him as his own soul." 1 Sam. 13. 1. Verily our life is bound up in the life of Jesus. Truly he hath loved us even unto the death. He took our part against our invincible foes, sin, satan, and death. He hath conquered all—for whom? "The children;" by nature children of wrath, by practice rebels against God. Yet, amazing grace! the objects of the Father's love. All that were given to him to redeem and save, behold they had an interest in Jesus' love, ere they had a being in the flesh: Therefore he prays for them as their Mediator; he owns them, by that special mark which the Holy Ghost puts upon each of them, in the day of his power, FAITH. "I pray for them also, which shall believe on me through my apostles word." John 17. 20.

We may joyfully triumph, "If Jesus be for us, who shall be against us?" Thus the sweet singer of Israel sings: "The Lord taketh my part, therefore I shall see my desire upon them that hate me." Psalm 118. 7. Every believer may be sure of victory. Faith in Jesus overcomes the world, disarms death of its sting, which is sin, enfeebles the strength of sin which is the law. By the blood of the Lamb satan is overcome. Thus we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Thus Christ gained the conquest in our nature, over satan and death, by taking away that which gave power to both, over his children, sin. This he effected by his own death: For he that died once for sin, ever lives to save. "Thank be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15. 57.

In a little wrath I hid myself from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. Isa. 54. 8.

Love is ever open and communicative: it conceals nothing from the object beloved, which may profit or comfort the mind. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" saith the God of love, concerning his friend. Gen. 18. 17. Of those that believe in, and follow the Lamb, he saith, "Ye are my friends." Servants are not made acquainted with their masters secrets; but friends are. Therefore saith Jesus, the great interpreter of covenant-love, "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. John 15. 15. Children shall not be chastised, but they shall be told of the Father's kindness and mercy in it. Love is ever in his heart, though wrath may appear in his conduct.

The joy of creation is revived by the bright shining of the sun: When he seems withdrawn, clouds, mists, and darkness gather. So when the sun of righteousness hides himself from the soul, it seems a dark season of wrath. The mists of corruptions arise—the thick fog of unbelief spreads itself—the gloom of dejection hangs heavy on the mind—and the prince of darkness is very busy at such a season; like Job's friends, he is a physician of no value, but a miserable comforter to the soul.

Now all sense, nature and feeling, write bitter things against the poor sinner. The Father chastises, the Saviour hides himself, the law accuses, conscience condemns, sin terrifies, Satan threatens, but, Father, thy mercy never dies. Therefore faith endures and turns to the law of love. What faith that? "In little wrath I hid myself." Little in comparison of thy deserts, O soul!—little compared with the greatness of the love of God. Faith listens to the testimony of Jesus. The Lord thy Redeemer speaks: My deserting thee is of the shortest duration; a moment; the twinkling of an eye: as no space of time compared to eternity. For with everlasting, never-ending kindness will I satisfy thee.

The word of the Lord, that shall stand. His covenant is sure—his love unchangeable—his promises immutable. Hence the soul is excited to confidence, to assurance, full assurance; yea the fullest assurance of a God of truth, though all present appearances seem against it. Then hope dawns in the soul, and love to Jesus is quickened. Holy shame and godly sorrow, for past follies, fill the heart, while the Comforter inwardly testifies of Jesus. His love, how infinite! his salvation, how perfect! his person, how precious! his promises, how reviving! his presence, how joyful! And every thing which interrupts it, how exceeding hateful and abominable! For such is Jesus' love, "Weeping may endure for a night [of desertion] but joy cometh in the morning" [of his returning presence.] Psalm 30. 5.

APRIL 5.

(95)

And the acknowledgement of the truth which is after godliness; according to the faith of God's elect. Tit. 1. 1.

St. Paul, though eminently distinguished as an apostle of Jesus, yet, in regard to the salvation of his own soul, his extraordinary gifts procured it not. Nor could his former hatred and persecution of Jesus and his members, frustrate the electing love of God, or obstruct the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit. But being chosen of God in Christ Jesus, his heart must partake of the precious faith of God's elect. Love, almighty wonderful love, seized him; Jesus challenged him as one of his blood-bought souls; stopped him in his mad career; touched his heart, and brought him trembling and astonished to his feet; and the power of faith in his heart is manifested by the obedient cry of his lips, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9. 6.

Thus election appears as a doctrine according to godliness. Faith in the heart is an evidence of interest in God's electing love; for it is a special gift of grace, and is connected with salvation. Eph. 2. 8. Faith proves itself to be a genuine grace of the Holy Spirit, for it glorifies Jesus; submits to and trusts in his righteousness for justification—pleads his blood for pardon—relies on his all-prevailing merits and intercession. Thus faith glorifies Jesus as a priest; and also honours Jesus as a king, to rule and govern the soul; yields obedience to him as a prophet, to instruct in the truths of godliness. So the believing soul is stripped of every self-righteous plea; brought as an humble, self-condemned sinner, to the feet of Jesus; and glories in him, as his only hope for life and whole salvation.

If there is no election of sinners by God the Father there is no true faith; for saving faith is peculiar to God's elect only. Doth any one object, "I do not believe the doctrine of election." We can only say, we cannot help you—we pity you—you do not understand your bible—you do not "yet acknowledge the truth which is after godliness." The faith of God's elect springs from God's electing love; has God for its author and finisher—Jesus, his life and death for its object—the truths of God's word are its warrant—God's promise in Christ Jesus its support—love and holiness its evidence—sure and certain glory and salvation is its end. Well may this be called precious faith indeed.

Whereas mere human faith, as it arises only from the power of the creature, it centers only in nature and self—talks high of terms and conditions—boasts much of human abilities—opposes free-grace—exalts the sinner—debases Jesus—denies the imputation of his righteousness—and renders salvation not only precarious and uncertain, but utterly impossible. O soul, study this truth daily! it tends to humility and rejoicing. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2. 8.

APRIL 6.

(96)

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. Isa. 12. 8.

Why, "therefore," what had the church done to procure such an inestimable promise? O the joyful day of her public espousal to Jesus is come. THAT DAY, that blessed day of power when the loving bride claims her beloved Bridegroom Jesus: Therefore she sings this joyful song, "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid: For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." The claims of the faith of poor sinners are well pleasing in the sight of God: So they honour his word, and glorify him; and cause joy in heaven among the angels: While the humble claimants obtain the consolation and joy thereof. "Them that honour me I will honour, saith the Lord," "therefore with joy shall they draw," &c.

This was not to be a transient fit of comfort, but an inexhaustible fountain of joy is opened; to which believers are to come daily, and draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation. Jehovah, the Father, is called, "the Fountain of living waters." Jer. 2. 13. Salvation takes its first spring from his everlasting love—is secured by his unalterable covenant, and unchangeable promises.

The Spirit and his grace are called, "a well of water springing up to everlasting life." John 4. 14. He shews poor sinners their want of this living water—its freshness and sweetness—supplies them with the bucket of faith to draw with joy, and drink out of. This well of salvation was opened in paradise: Its streams have run through every successive age of the church. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, believers in all ages, have had their hearts made glad, and their souls joyful hereby.

The everlasting love of the Father, the rich grace of the Son, the exuberant joy of the Holy Ghost, compose these wells of salvation. Yet it is but one fountain of grace; flowing from the divine essence; and is communicated to us from the fulness of the man Jesus. Hence we are called to draw freely with joy—invited by Jesus, "O friends, O beloved, drink! yea drink abundantly." Cant. 5. 1. This fountain is ever free, full, and inexhaustible. Why, O why then are we not always joyful? Why do we ever complain for want of comfort? The well is ever open; the fountain ever near. Why do we so much neglect, so often forsake this fountain of living waters? where is our faith? why is that precious bucket given us, but for use and exercise? So shall we the more glorify the God of all consolation; be refreshed in our spirits, and made fruitful in our lives; and our thirst allayed after the perishing comforts of time and sense. For saith Jesus, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." John 4. 14.

Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. Gal. 2. 16.

"We therefore do make this definition of a christian, that he is not one who is without sin, but one to whom God imputeth not his sin through faith in Christ. Here we must be nothing at all, but only receive the treasure, which is Christ, and apprehend him in our hearts by faith, though we feel ourselves to be never so full of sin. Thus God will glorify his Son, and be glorified in us through him." Thus evangelically, being dead, yet speaketh that eminent champion of Jesus, Luther: We having the same spirit of faith, do thus speak—make the same confession—rejoice in the same hope, being justified by the same Jesus—comforted by the same truth—and sanctified by the same Spirit—are heirs of the same promises, and intitled to the same kingdom.

Here the most dignified apostle, as well as the most obscure sinner, are upon a level. There is no difference, each hath the same evils to be delivered from—the same object to be saved by—both believe in one Jesus, to the same blessed end, to enjoy peace and pardon from God the Father. In the knowledge of this consists all our comfort; and for this, as poor needy sinners, we are constantly to cleave to Jesus from hour to hour. Have we believed, many years since, that we might be justified? (True, once justified, and ever so; never after condemned, as viewed in Jesus in the sight of God; "For who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" Rom. 8. 34.) But how is it now in our consciences? Faith is a rooted grace in the soul, it cannot be lost. Love is its inseparable companion: sweet peace is its blessed fruit. But "Do ye now believe?" said Jesus. Have you the love of God in you? doth the sense of peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, abide in the heart? If not, intervening clouds from the world, sin, satan, or the law, intercept the light of God's countenance, and the sunshine of his love. What then? must we live and die without hope? No: blessed be God, he rests in his love: It is ever the same. Jesus, ever lives and prays; gospel-grace is still proclaimed to the wretched. If we know the truth, we shall be restless till we have come, as at the beginning, to Jesus, owning our sin, and grieving for our folly, and believe in him that we may be justified, have a fresh sense of pardon and peace. "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee, for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee," Psalm 9. 10.

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37. 5.

We are too apt to forget where we are, what we are called to, and whither we are going. When we take a survey of the present state of men and things, and judge according to the appearances to nature and sense, and see one event happen alike to all, we are ready to ask, what advantage then hath the christian? or what profit is there to the new-born believing soul? Much, every way. For unto them, chiefly, are committed the lively oracles of God. The bible is an epistle of love; in which the tender affections of our loving Father, the living and dying compassions of our elder Brother Jesus, breathe in every page. Here we see the various conflicts and trials our former brethren in the flesh were exercised with; how they were supported under, and carried through all, safe to glory; and that by the very same grace and power which is still our happy portion. They, being dead, yet speak to us; to animate and encourage our hearts to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. We see in them the inexplicable mysteries of providence unveiled—how out of the weakness of nature they were made strong in grace.

It is the glory and excellency of believers to take their views, and form their judgment from God's truths—to oppose nature, sense and feeling—to stand still and wait to see the salvation of God—to omit no appointed means, but to be diligent in the ways of God's institutions; quietly and patiently submitting every issue to his wisdom and goodness. This is the obedience of faith, and is attended with the patience of hope, and the issue is always determined in love: It is impossible it should be otherwise; for it is the immutable decree of heaven: "All things do work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose and grace." Rom 8. 28.

Committing our way to God unburdens the mind—trusting our all to him, makes the heart quite easy—relying on him, to bring our concerns to pass, makes the spirit joyful. But when carnal reason is suffered to make its report, then, with Jacob, we cry, "All these things are against us." Hence fainting and drooping come from fear—fear from doubting—doubting from unbelief—and unbelief chiefly prevails through ignorance and inattention to God's word of grace, his covenant love, precious promises, and solemn oath in Christ Jesus. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. 26. 4.

Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.

Rom. 11. 20.

So we are called upon by the spirit of prophecy, "Behold [give the most earnest attention, let this truth sink deep in your heart] his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." Habak. 2. 4. Standing by faith, and living by faith, is ever opposed to pride, vain confidence, and an high conceit of our own attainments. True faith in Jesus sinks the soul in humility, works by real love to God, is accompanied with a child-like fear of offending him, and excites to a godly jealousy over our own souls, lest we fall—fall into sin—fall away from the hope of the gospel—fall from the precious privileges of Jesus, and the comforting sense of his love. Without this, what is profession, but an empty name—talking ever so highly, but a sound of words—pretension to the greatest things, but a vain shadow, while the substance is not enjoyed?

It is the glorying of believers in Jesus, that they are "delivered out of the hands of their enemies; that they might serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life," Luke 1. 74, 75. and it is added, "without fear." But are we to cast off all kind of fear to God? No verily: no more than faith in him, love to him, and hope of enjoying him. One would dread such a state most of all, the Lord himself being judge. "Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." Jer. 2. 19.

Glory to Jesus, by his grace the bands of legal bondage are broken asunder; the cords of slavish fear, of wrath and hell, we cast from us: yet faith and fear go hand in hand. And this is the blessedness of everlasting love, and new covenant-grace, "I, saith Jehovah, will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. 32. 40. So shall they fear me for ever for their good. This is the precious fear the apostle exhorts to, which is ever to be cherished in the heart, and attended to in one's daily walk. A fear of departing from the Lord Jesus tends to keep the soul close to him. Fear of offending causes watchfulness. Hope in a sin-pardoning God produceth fear. A sense of pardon increaseth it. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Psalm 130. 4.

This is our daily duty, to "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Isa. 8. 13. This is our evangelical privilege, our highest wisdom; and hence we have nothing else to fear. For "happy is the man that feareth always. But he that hardneth his heart [against the fear of the Lord] shall fall into mischief." Prov. 28. 14.

Remember the word unto thy servant; upon which thou hast caused me to hope. Psalm 119. 49.

Where there is a true knowledge of Jesus, the essential Word, there will be a real esteem for the scriptures, the written word of Jehovah; for the Spirit that dwelt in Jesus dictated the truths concerning him; and it is the same Spirit that testifies of Jesus in the hearts of his children. By the word we are favoured with clear ideas, just conceptions, and encouraging views of the truths of grace and salvation. Hence we have the firmest foundation, the strongest confidence and fullest assurance to build our faith and hope upon. Hence also we are embolden'd to draw nigh to a throne of grace, to plead our case, present our distress, and claim, with humble boldness, a supply for all our need. Now when there is a death upon all comfortable sense and joyful feelings—when all things around us wear a gloomy aspect—when conscience within, writes bitter things against us—the law works wrath, and its terrors make us afraid—and an insulting foe, to heighten distress and increase our sorrows, stands over us, with “there, there, so would I have it.” In such a season, O it is life from the dead, to remember the infinitely transcendent love, victorious toils, triumphant conquests of Jesus over all things for us. How joyful to read that all the promises center in him; and that they are infallibly sure and certain to all the seed—yea and Amen; to the glory of God the Father. How establishing to hear such gracious words from the mouth of Jehovah, “I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins?” Isa. 43. 25. How powerfully alluring, how sweetly attracting to the affections when love calls, “put me in remembrance.”—plead with me—thou shalt not call in vain—I will hear—I will answer thee? Thus love, thus grace descends to the heart; thus it speaks by the word, and thus desires are kindled in the soul, blown into a flame, and ascend in fervent earnest prayer and pleading to a faithful, promise-fulfilling God.

Surely we can never enough prize God's word—never sufficiently adore the Holy Spirit, for the knowledge of Jesus by the word. And if the word of the Lord is our hope, we have eternal truth, everlasting love, infinite power, and unchangeable faithfulness engaged for us. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.” Rom. 15. 4.

Jesus said unto them, "Take heed what ye hear. Mark 4. 24.

It is our unspeakable mercy, (it calls for our daily tribute of praise, and daily study to improve it) that a free use of the lively oracles of truth is permitted us. Others are denied this rich privilege. Happy for those to whom the word of God is the rule of their faith, the light to direct their paths, and the standard whereby they try and prove the doctrines they hear, whether they are of God or man. The whole truth, as it is in Jesus, is precious to every believer. "Faith comes by hearing;" but then it is the word of God. As the ear is the inlet to the soul, we should ever take heed what kind of doctrines we hear. It was through the ear satan gained access to the heart of Eve at the beginning, and beguiled her by deceitful whispers. St. Paul alludes to this, 2 Cor. 11. 3. "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." What is this simplicity? Even this one plain simple truth, that salvation is by Jesus Christ only, according to the everlasting purpose and love of God the Father, revealed in the word of truth, and applied to the soul by the holy Spirit. Lost and perishing sinners are the happy subjects; but have no hand in procuring, or making it effectual; but they are saved by the election of grace through faith. Whatever doctrines are contrary to either of these points—they oppose the revealed truths—are subversive of the plan of salvation—tend to rob God of his glory—and his dear children of their comfort and joy of faith.

Therefore, ye disciples of the Lamb, take heed; beware of what you hear. These truths are not merely speculative, or non-essential, but are the important, fundamental, essential truths of the gospel. To oppose the doctrine of election, is to deny the first cause of salvation, the everlasting love of God the Father; it is to gainsay the prophets, apostles, and even our Lord himself, who spake most clearly and plainly of it. It is to set ones-self against the testimony of the Spirit of truth, and ariseth from human pride, which ever imagines it can do something to procure God's love. So of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the saints perseverance in faith and holiness. If these scripture-truths are maligned and opposed, it is from the supposed self-sufficiency and self-righteousness of the creature, in order to establish its own righteousness and faithfulness. Hence salvation becomes precarious, justification impossible. This strikes at the root of true holiness, and tends both to presumption and licentiousness; for whatever truths are revealed in the word by the Spirit of wisdom and truth (and all these are as though wrote with a sun-beam) it is that they should be the food of our faith, the matter of our study, the cause of humility, the confidence of hope, the rejoicing of love, and excitements to holiness. "Approving ourselves by the word of truth. 2 Cor. 6. 7.

And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him. Josh. 7. 19.

The Lord our God is a jealous God; jealous of his own glory and his people's good. Sin is contrary to both; therefore he so loves his people, that he will not suffer sin to reign in them. Wilful allowed sin, however secret, he will chastise for, and bring the soul to confession and repentance of. Though sin shall not bring God's dear children to hell, yet it brings a hell into the conscience for a season; it will break the peace of mind, though not break the covenant of peace.

Wilful transgression causes the Lord to hide his face, or frown upon his dear children. This weakens their hands, dejects their hearts, and the enemy gets power against them. This was the case with Achan; therefore the accursed thing must be found out, confessed and put away. Methinks 'Achan's case should remind the believer of his carnal sinful nature. It is from hence spring all his troubles. Indulging its sinful motions, brings grief to the soul—encouraging an opinion of its goodness and righteousness, is dissembling with God, hiding somewhat in the tent, which is abominable to him, and which robs him of his glory.

The flesh, with its lusts and corruptions, though we may think of it as Achan, of the Babylonish garment, that it is goodly, yet is accursed by the law of God. Therefore we are exhorted, through the Spirit, "to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Like the wedge of gold, and the shekels of silver, all must be given up; we must retain none of its riches and treasures. How often has our flesh made our hands hang down, and our knees faint, and our hearts troubled?

O christian! thou son of the most high, give glory to the Lord God of Israel—hide nothing in thy earth, in thy vile nature from thy Lord and Saviour—make confession unto Jesus of all that is in thee, vile and abominable, wretched and hell-deserving as thou art by nature—give Jesus all the glory of redemption and salvation—expect no good from the flesh, in the pleasures and enjoyments of sense—seek it all in Jesus, and from his Spirit. As Achan troubled Israel, he must therefore perish in the valley of Achor. So, christian, the flesh that troubles thy Spirit, is shortly to fall and die under the sentence for sin. But, saith the Lord, "I will give the valley of Achor [trouble] for a door of hope." Hosea 2. 15. "Though sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory, for, saith Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11. 25.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. Heb. 2. 1.

The body receives little nourishment, if its food hastily pass through it. To health and strength proper digestion is necessary. Divine truths, eagerly heard and soon forgot, do not comfort, nor strengthen the soul. When the babe Jesus was lying in the manger, and the shepherds had told the glorious things they had seen and heard concerning him, many wondered. But it was the happiness of the virgin mother, "she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2. 19. We can never be comfortable in Jesus, but while the truths concerning him dwell in our minds.

Many complain of bad memories. They can retain but little of the doctrines of grace. True, Jesus saves none for the sake of a strong memory; neither will his loving heart cast off any because of a weak one. Yet it is our daily interest to take the wholesome advice which the Spirit of wisdom dictates. His word is our direction. His gracious cautions are necessary to prevent evils. The means he teacheth, are profitable to the soul's health. It behoves us to give the most earnest heed to the truths of Jesus—they demand all our attention—pondering them in our minds—dwelling on them in our hearts, continually tend through grace to keep us watchful against what would rob us of their comfort, and to strengthen our memories, to retain the sweet sense of them. Hence a holy fear will be excited, lest we at any time lose the favour of them from our hearts.

Sudden flashes of comfort, hasty transports of joy, are dubious as to their cause, often followed by severe attacks from the enemy. It is by the word of truth we are to try them; and it is by that we shall be able to stand. The gospel of grace inspires with courage, and through the knowledge of Jesus we shall conquer. That Spirit, which excites to diligence and care, will establish in the truth. Studious souls, in the school of Jesus, make the most established and lively disciples. The opposition of enemies to the truths of electing love, Jesus' righteousness, the final salvation of his redeemed children, &c. shall do us no harm. This shall be over-ruled by grace to the rooting and establishing the faith of God's children. The oak is rooted stronger, by the blast that shakes it. The more we see of the evil of sin, the pride and unbelief of our corrupt natures, and the subtle devices of satan, so much the more dear and precious shall we esteem the doctrines of free grace, and the salvation of Jesus. And we shall prove ourselves his true disciples, "If we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Heb. 3. 6.

He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. Psalm 106. 15.

When the sunshine of worldly ease, and a greater portion of the good things of this life, than he was wont to enjoy, fell to the lot of that champion of Jesus of blessed memory, Luther, it excited a holy fear and jealousy in his heart, which made him cry out, "Lord, I will not be put off with these things." However pleasant and agreeable worldly prosperity may be to the flesh, yet indulging and pampering the body overspreads and feeds many disorders and humours, which are destructive to the health of the soul. The body without exercise naturally loses its strength and vigor. Afflictions are the exercise of the soul; though they be dreaded because grievous to the flesh, yet are they profitable to the spirit; or else not one of God's dear children should know what a single trouble is; for they are all the allotments of covenant love. In our prayers we too often imitate James and John, "we know not what we ask." We ask amiss, and yet are ready to complain that the Lord doth not answer us according to our desire; though the very thing we have sought would have proved as a serpent, to bite and destroy us.

O what patience doth our God and Father exercise towards the froward dispositions of his dear but untoward children! It would be bad for the best of us, if we were our own carvers. Let Peter have his request and Jesus shall not die; then Peter and every soul of man must have perished. It is our mercy that the Lord sometimes answers prayers with denials; he most blesses us by not granting our petitions. Saints long and pray to be intirely delivered from the body of sin, but though the Lord doth not take it away, yet he gives what is better, grace to subdue our corruptions; and withal, subdues pride, and keeps the soul dependent upon himself; which is best of all. Thy will, thy glory should ever set bounds to our petitions. The health and prosperity of the immortal soul, is infinitely to be preferred to the enjoyment and happiness of the perishing body. Gay clothing, with empty pockets and a lean starving body, is a distressed condition. But how much more deplorable? how awfully to be dreaded the state of many professors? They have got what they eagerly sought, and earnestly requested; the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world. But alas! their precious souls are in a lean, starving, famishing condition. Can the comforts and joys of a perishing world compensate the want of a sense of God's love, the reviving grace of our Lord Jesus, and the comforting fellowship of the Holy Ghost? "Hearken diligently unto me, eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isa. 55. 2.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. Luke 24. 45.

Though Jesus had captivated the heart, and drawn the affections of his disciples to himself, before his sufferings and death; yet they seemed to have very little knowledge in the mysteries of his kingdom, and of the mystery of iniquity which worked in them; being but weak in their understanding of the holy scriptures. Hence arose their diffidence and suspicions concerning him: he left them scattered through fear and unbelief, and he finds them full of unreasonable doubts and troubles. For this he reproves them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe, &c." But amidst all their weakness and ignorance, there was a sweet and secret confidence in their poor hearts. Jesus had apprehended them as prisoners of love, and they were kept by an invisible power, that they might apprehend that for which also they were apprehended of Christ. Though he made the hearts of two of his disciples "burn within them," yet there was more warmth than light; a transient heat of affections, but not a settled understanding and judgment in the scriptures. Thus it is with many of the lambs of the flock. They have been taught to call "Jesus Lord by the Holy Ghost." They feel some flashes of comfort, but they are oftner exercised with troubles, doubts and fears, jealousies and surmises. But as the Saviour hath loved them, and called them to himself, he will establish their hearts in the faith. He not only warms the affections, but opens the understanding. Many mistake here: Not the heat of our passions is to govern us, but our understanding of the scriptures. By this our faith is strengthened—our judgment established—our love increased—our hearts comforted—our holiness promoted. Thus Jesus honoured the scriptures of truth; so he gave his first-resurrection blessing to his weak but sincere disciples. This is the loving instruction of his Spirit, "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby."

1 Pet. 2. 2.

"Jesus died for our sins, and rose again according to the scriptures," 1 Cor. 15. 3. His whole work on earth was to fulfil the scriptures. So he honoured them: And herein he has left disciples an example. Prize the word of truth—study it constantly—pray over it daily. By the word the Spirit teacheth knowledge. The scriptures are the sword of the Spirit: Satan will fly before them. Through the understanding of the scriptures we are to expect comfort, peace and joy: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Rom. 15. 4.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to him be glory both now and ever. 2 Pet. 3. 18.

Because there is danger of christians being led away by the error of the wicked-one, and of declining in the good ways of the Lord, and falling from the stedfastness of faith which they had once attained; therefore exhortations are highly expedient to warn them of danger, and to stir up and quicken their souls to stronger and more lively exercises of faith and love. The exhortations of the word and the influences of the Spirit cause new-born souls to grow and increase with the increase of God. Like as the reviving showers of rain, and the warm influences of the sun, cause the fruits of the earth to increase and flourish. As in the creation of nature, so in the spiritual creation there is a growth and increase. It therefore behoves every follower of the Lamb to consider this matter—to be earnest in prayer—to wrestle with his Lord, that his hands do not hang down, nor his knees grow faint; but that “he may be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”

To know and experience the grace of God, is our special mercy. To grow more acquainted with the free-grace truths, the rich, everlasting, electing, sovereign love of God the Father, this is our richest consolation, our highest joy on earth. All this grace of the Father flows to us sinners through the knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith. If thou hast experienced a little of this special grace—hast a little knowledge of this precious Saviour; in this consists thy present blessedness, peace and joy. But alas! what is thy knowledge and experience of it, but like a drop of water to the vast ocean? Doth not thy soul, like David, still “long after the water that is at the well of Bethlehem?” 1 Chron. 11. 17. Art thou not crying out, I thirst for more satisfying draughts—O that I may daily drink deeper into the grace of God and knowledge of Jesus? Such is the nature of grace, such the property of the knowledge of Jesus; it creates an insatiable desire, hunger and thirst in the soul after larger measures and greater increase of it. Nor can the believing babe in Christ rest satisfied till he comes in the unity of faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Ephes. 4. 13. New-born babes in Christ are exhorted to “desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.” 1 Pet. 2. 2. The bud of grace shall blossom and bear ripe fruit. The smallest knowledge of Jesus shall be increased until faith is lost in sight, and hope is swallowed up in fruition; and the love of an unseen Jesus on earth shall ripen into the fullest enjoyment of his presence in heaven. And all this to the glory of God the Father, who hath made us accepted in the beloved. Ephes. 1. 6.

For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls.

1 Pet. 2. 25.

Scripture allusions continually remind us, "That salvation is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy." Therefore not unto us, not to our free-will, but to thy free-grace, O Lord, be all the glory! Like that poor silly creature, a sheep, we are naturally prone to stray into all kinds of danger, but unapt to return of ourselves: We never will, till the shepherd seeks us. "We have turned every one to his own way"—have lost ourselves in the wilderness of sin—wounded by the wolf of prey—blinded by pride, self-will, and self-righteousness—delighted in our distance from the good shepherd—and pleasing ourselves in feeding on carnal lusts and sensual vanities, while our poor souls were in a starving perishing condition. Unparalleled love!—the sheep's wounds are healed by the shepherd's stripes—forgiveness is obtained by the bishop's sufferings and death. And all this proclaimed by the shepherd's voice. But, "Oh! what fools! how slow of heart to believe this?" This keeps many poor sheep from returning to Jesus: and those that have heard his voice and are returned to him, do not keep so close to him as is their interest and happiness. The loving Shepherd complains of this, Jer. 2. 31. "Have I been a barren wilderness unto you, O ye sheep of my pasture?" No, truly: our souls can never be healthy and thriving, but while we have our Shepherd in view, and are feeding in the green pastures of his love, by the still waters of his salvation.

It behoves Christ's sheep to consider daily, how dear they are to him—what sweet relation he stands in to them—what love and care he has for them—that so Jesus may be more endeared to them—his pastoral instructions, cautions and directions may influence their walk and conversation. For the adversary is ever working upon our treacherous nature, to make us conceive of Jesus, otherwise than a faithful shepherd, and loving overseer, that as terrified and affrighted sheep we may fly from him; that we may cease to love, follow and imitate him; that we may be conformed to and enjoy him. "We are not ignorant of satan's devices".

2 Cor. 2. 11.

The Lord my Shepherd is,
I shall be well supply'd;
Since he is mine, and I am his,
What can I want beside?

If e'er I go astray
He doth my soul reclaim,
And guides me in his own right way
For his most holy name.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called to the fellowship of Son Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 1. 9.

While we entertain notions of a God out of Christ, it can afford no comfort to the mind to hear of God's faithfulness. Nay, if we were not blind to our state, as sinners, the thought would fill us with dread and horror. For how awful, how terrifying is that declaration from a faithful God, that he "will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. 34. 7. But to know, that the Lord our God, he is God, the faithful God "who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." Deut. 7. 9. O this is the life of poor sinners souls! this is the joy of their hearts. For whenever one reads of the covenant, it reminds of Jesus the mediator—of a God in Christ—a God of love—a reconciled God and Father. Though we have no immediate access to the Father, but by his Son Jesus Christ, yet being called into fellowship, intercourse, familiarity and sweet converse with Jesus by faith, then we have free access to the Father's throne of grace, and his heart of love. We glory in his great and precious promises, and triumph in his declarations of faithfulness and truth. For these soul-comforting, faith-establishing views, we are indebted to the gracious and benign Spirit.

The faithfulness of God, is the foundation of all present grace; the security of future glory. Many weak disciples are perplexed with dark and disturbing thoughts in this matter. Their hearts are not carried up to rest in the love of the Father; here all is serene and quiet; but they rest below in the regions of doubts and fears, storms and clouds. Their souls may be exercised, and often distressed; but they are safe, because called to the knowledge, faith, and fellowship of their elder Brother Jesus. This is of the love of the Father through the power of the Spirit. And God is faithful to his covenant, to his Son, to his people in him, to his word to them, and work in them. "For whom he calls, them he glorifies." Faithful to support them under all present dejections of mind and sinking of spirits. Faithful to preserve them in all times of danger, and to give them living comforts in a dying-hour. Faithful to confirm them unto the end, that they may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Cor. 1. 8.

Our God, how firm his promise stands,
E'en when he hides his face.
He trusts in our Redeemer's hands
His glory and his grace.

Then why, my soul, these sad complaints,
Since Christ and we are one?
Thy God is faithful to his saints,
Is faithful to his Son,

What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Rom. 6. 1.

Believer in Jesus, what are the thoughts of thy mind? what the answer of thine heart this day, in regard to thy walk and conduct in life, from the important doctrines of grace? Canst thou say the everlasting love of God the Father, reigning through the righteousness of Jesus unto eternal life, manifested in the gospel, and applied by the Holy Spirit through faith? hath this the least tendency to give reins to thy lust, to open a wide door of licentiousness, and to encourage thee to continue in sin? doth the belief of the guilt of sin, being atoned by the precious blood of Jesus, influence thee to the love of sin? doth the knowledge of the imputation of Jesus' righteousness unto justification of life, tend to make thee delight in unrighteousness, and unholiness of life? By no means: God forbid! To bring such an hainous charge against divine truths, O what daring impiety! what horrid blasphemy! beware of such a thought; indulge it not one moment; it comes from the adversary of all truth; it impeaches the wisdom and holiness of the Spirit of truth; for he reveals these soul-saving, Christ glorifying, God-honouring truths, and by his gracious gift of faith sinners receive and embrace them. But to what end? Hereby they see the display of justice—mercy triumphing in righteousness—their souls established in a sense of peace and pardon—and most powerfully influenced by the Spirit of truth to the love of personal holiness and obedience. Sooner ascribe midnight darkness and winter's frost to the source of light, and heat the sun, than once imagine, O soul, the grace of God leads to sin, or the aboundings of grace to a continuance in sin. No; this is through aboundings of lust and corruption: so saith James, chap. 1. 15. "When lust hath conceived it brings forth sin." But grace conceived in the heart brings forth holiness. The greater discoveries of God's love, the clearer views of the fulness of the redemption by Jesus Christ, and the certain salvation of Believers thereby; as these are given by the word of God's grace, and the Spirit of all truth, so their native influence upon the soul, is to the fruits of righteousness, and the abounding of personal holiness in heart and life. O may the cheering light of truth be ever accompanied with the warm influences of the Sun of righteousness upon the heart.

Then shall we best proclaim abroad
The honours of our Saviour God,

When his salvation reigns within,
And grace subdues the pow'r of sin.

He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world.
Eph. i. 4.

So the apostles wrote and preached, to comfort and establish their brethren in the faith of Christ, in the love of God, and in the sanctification of the Spirit unto all true holiness. The election of sinners, by God the Father, in Christ Jesus from all eternity, is the foundation from which all faith and hope spring. If this truth is rejected, the atonement of Jesus is made precarious; the work of the Spirit is made uncertain—salvation doubtful—faith is made void—the promise of none effect—and the hope of salvation depends on the will and power of sinners, instead of the grace and truth of God. But in every age men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, have opposed God's sovereign grace and eternal purposes. God hath suffered it, "that those who are approved might be made manifest." 1 Cor. 11. 19. Humble, self-emptying sinners, who are poor in spirit, and lowly in their own eyes, plainly discern what systems of human pride, what schemes of self-confidence are set up to establish vain hopes, and self-righteous pleas, in opposition to the truths of God: "If it were possible, to deceive the very elect of God." Matt. 24. 24. But his love towards his children is too great to suffer it. And they do well to take heed to the true light of electing grace and love; which shineth with such glory, peace and love in the person of Jesus, to the comfort of their souls, through the faith of him.

"Beware of men; call no man Rabbi;" saith our divine teacher. Yet saith Paul to his son Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men; who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2. 2. So a standing ministry hath been established, whom God hath sent forth in every age to preach, boldly to preach the God-glorifying, soul-humbling, faith-establishing, sin-subduing truths of the gospel. Human compositions, agreeable to God's truth, are precious; as they are made establishing to the faithful. Thanks to God for those sweet and comfortable words of the 17th article of the established church. Our pious reformers say, "The godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members; and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things. It doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ. It doth fervently kindle their love towards God." Here are blessed scriptural marks of a true christian: if thou findest them in thine own heart give God the glory of electing love; and "hold fast this form of sound words in faith and love." 2 Tim. 1. 13.

If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2. 1.

In the glass of God's holy and righteous law we see what an unholy and unrighteous thing sin is: it is hateful in the eyes of a pure God; therefore it has separated between God and the sinner, and tends to his eternal destruction. The gospel in no wise renders sin less odious to God—less hainous in his sight; far from it. Yea, rather it paints sin in the blackest colours, and shews its deepest malignancy, by the gracious method of its atonement. View the holy Lamb suffering for sin on the cross; see the streaming blood and hear the direful agonies of the Son of God on account of sin; and say, O believer, is sin a little matter, a trifling thing? Learn daily sin's evil by its remedy—its poison by its antidote—the hell it deserved by the person who redeems: And ever, O my soul, hold fast this as a sacred truth, though God loves thy person in Christ Jesus, yet he hates thy sins—though reconciled to thy soul through the Son of his love, yet he never can be reconciled to sin—though at peace with thee through the blood of the cross, yet ever at enmity against thy sins. Hence the beloved disciple declares, "These things write I unto you, little children, that ye sin not." Beware of sin as the worst evil; watch against sin, strive against it, oppose, resist it in the power of the Spirit, as your most deadly foe, your worst enemy; most hateful and displeasing to your best friend.

But if any man sin (for none are perfectly free from sin in their nature, nor wholly exempt from it in their practice) must he lie down and despair? No: "We have an advocate with the Father:" Jesus Christ pleads the cause of sinners, though he is not an advocate for sin, for he is the righteous. Therefore he doth not deny the charge that we are sinners—doth not plead for us, not guilty in ourselves; he extenuates none of our sins, but owns every accusation brought into court against us by a perfect law and strict justice; with every aggravating circumstance which can be urged; and against all that law and justice can charge upon us, he pleads his own undertaking—his life and death—his blood—his righteousness. His people have sinned; his blood hath atoned. They have contracted guilt; he hath suffered the punishment. They have deserved the curse of the law; he has bore it for them. They have deserved hell; he has opened the kingdom of heaven. They are unrighteous in themselves; Jesus hath fulfilled the law for them, and clothes them with his perfect righteousness. Therefore he pleads that sin may not be imputed to them; but that pardon of sin and peace of conscience may be bestowed upon them by the word and Spirit; and that they may be sanctified in him, and glorified with him.

The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. Prov. 13. 4.

In the busy scenes of life, in the awful moments of death, the formal professor, as well as the profligate and profane, will confess they desire to escape misery and woe, and enjoy heaven and happiness. But alas! how vain and fruitless are such desires? If these may be called good desires, "the way to hell is paved with them," saith an ancient father of the church. But in this, the wisdom of the children of God is manifested. They are diligent in the use of such means, which, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, will be crowned with a blessed end. They can't rest in desiring, but possessing; not in wishing, but enjoying. They find and feel their souls want continual supplies of food from Jesus, support from his promises, nourishment from his word and ordinances, and life from his Spirit: and as their desires are quickened, their diligence is drawn out after these things.

Truth and wisdom declare, they shall not barely be kept from starving, just preserved alive, like Pharaoh's lean kine, but shall be fed and nourished, yea like healthy sheep in rich pastures, they shall grow fat. Here is encouragement for thy diligence; here is a spur to thy activity, O disciple. Here is the promise of thy Lord. Where is thy faith? Dost thou perceive thy soul decline, instead of growing fat? Do lusts and corruptions gain ground, and the love of the world get the ascendancy of the love of the Father in thy poor heart? Is the edge of thy spiritual appetite palled? and can't thou not taste, feed nor feast on the rich repast of Jesus' redeeming love as heretofore? wherefore is this? Hast thou not reason to charge thyself with sloth and indolence? Hast thou not been sleeping on thy bed of ease, when thou mightest have been seeking the food of thy soul? Indulging thy perishing body, when thou mightest have used means for feeding thy immortal spirit? if so, the word of grace, and the testimony of thy conscience, convicts thee, that this is not right, thou oughtest to take shame to thyself: surely it is thy duty to humble thyself, and to call upon the Spirit to quicken thee. Though saved in the Lord Jesus with an everlasting salvation, yet by his word and Spirit thou art called "to give all diligence to make thy calling and election sure," and in this way the Lord will nourish souls in love, and make them fat in the consolations of his grace.

Aspire, my soul, to glorious deeds,
The Captain of salvation leads;
March on, nor fear to win the day,
The death and hell obstruct the way.

Should death and hell, and pow'rs unknown,
Put all their forms of mischief on,

I shall be safe; for Christ displays
Salvation by his sov'reign grace.

*Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness,
God was manifest in the flesh. 1 Tim. 3. 16.*

The truths of the gospel are undoubtedly great mysteries. We have naturally no ideas of their existence, but being plainly revealed by the Spirit of truth, they cease to be hid from our knowledge; and in this respect they are no longer secret mysteries in their matter, but plain and open truths. True, the manner of their existence is incomprehensible to reason: In this they will ever remain mysteries to us. Therefore the sons of natural pride and ignorance reject and disbelieve them; while the children of wisdom and humility esteem the whole mystery of godliness, every bible-truth, as the precious object of their faith. Blessed be God, our comfort and salvation lies in believing, not in explaining. The christian, like the prophet Jeremiah, being born of the Spirit, is a man of strife and contention with the whole earth. Jer. 15. 10. All in nature and carnal reason are in arms against the truths he believes. Because he earnestly contends for them, he will ever find controversy and perverse disputings from men of corrupt minds destitute of the truth. His zeal here is always commendable, only let it be in love.

What the Lord hath taught in his word, we implicitly receive as the food of our souls. This is our simple answer to the God of this world, and to the wise disputer of this age. We cannot comprehend how God dwelt in flesh, but we are fully assured he did. We have the fullest proof of it in his word; and his word is truth: And it is the very life of our souls, and the joy of our hearts, to believe our God. We know why God dwelt in flesh, and the glorious ends he hath accomplished hereby. Of this also we are perfectly assured. We believe it from the same infallible testimony. To the faith of this we have the inward witness of the Spirit also. God, known in the flesh, beheld in human form, viewed in our nature, is the very essence of our faith; we partake its blessings and experience its comforts. Hence springs the assured pardon of all our sins, the acceptance of our persons, the sanctification of our souls, and sure and certain hope of eternal life and glory, according to the purpose and decree of the everlasting covenant of grace, to the glory of the ever-blessed Trinity, and to the comfort and salvation of lost sinners. Thus saints are called into "one body, by one Spirit, have one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one atonement, one righteousness, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all." Ephes. 4. 4.

Mortals with joy beheld his face,
Th' eternal Father's only Son;
How full of truth! how full of grace!
When thro' his eyes the Godhead shone.

Archangels leave their high abode,
To learn new myst'ries here; and tell
The loves of our descending God,
The glories of Emanuel.

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.
1 Cor. 9. 27.

The neglect of this brings on leanness of soul. If this enemy gains ground it is alarming; if he prevails it causes mourning; but when he is kept low, and supplies are cut off, his power is weakened, and victory over him is easily gained. Such are the sensitive powers, carnal affections, and sinful inclinations which compose part of our present frame, the body: a body of sin and death. To gratify and fulfil them is very pleasing and delightful to nature and sense. But how awfully subversive of the comforts of faith, the peace of the mind, and the joy of the soul, thy own sad experience, O disciple, hath proved. Nor can it be otherwise. Let us not deceive ourselves. We cannot indulge and pamper the life of the flesh but to the hurt and injury of the life of the soul. There is an irreconcilable enmity between the flesh and the spirit—the old man and the new. The variance and strife will ever subsist while we are in the body. It is the Lord's sovereign will to leave the Canaanites still in the land.

But, "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness," Isa. 32. 1. This is our beloved Jesus. Here is the exercise of faith in him, the touchstone of our love, and the proof of our allegiance to him, in striving daily for the mastery—to conflict with and fight against every inordinate affection and corrupt lust of our fallen sinful nature, and to keep them under, and bring them into subjection to him. It is hard work to fight with an enemy that is part of oneself; but Jesus' banner hath this motto, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross daily, and follow me." Though the work is ours, yet thine, O Jesus, is the power.

Faith in Jesus not only accepts his imputed righteousness for justification, but has also a lively dependence on Christ for every supply of his Spirit for further sanctification. It leaves not the soul in a lazy languid state, but causes the soul to aspire after greater delight in God, and conformity to God; it eyes God as its center; enjoyment of him as its happiness, and full conformity to him as its perfection. To indulge, pamper, and gratify the flesh is contrary hereto; therefore mortification and self-denial, and subjecting the flesh to the spirit will be the exercise of living, believing, loving souls.

What diff'rent pow'rs of grace and sin
Attend our mortal state?
I hate the thoughts that work within,
And do the works I hate.

Thus will the flesh and spirit strive,
And vex and break my peace;
I long to live a glorious life,
When sin shall ever cease.

The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. Psalm 94. 14.

A meteor will expire when the earthly matter is spent that maintained the blaze for a time. Profession may carry to an high elevation. Persons may appear as fixed stars, in the church of Christ; but time may discover them to be no other than shining meteors, or shooting and falling stars. Yea, angels have not kept their first estate. But the Lord's chosen people is his portion; the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of Christ: "All those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Psalm 92. 13. Here is the consolation of Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, "He that believeth in Jesus shall be saved;" not for days, months, years, but saved with an everlasting salvation. For such are the objects of the everlasting love of an unchangeable God, who will never cast off or forsake them.

David knew that friends had cast him off; yea father and mother might forsake him—his frames and feelings had forsaken him—his joys had withered, and his comforts seemed all blasted in an hour; but says he, age and observation have fully confirmed me in this truth, "I never saw the righteous forsaken of his God:" "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down." Why so? Truly, saith he, "The Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Psalm 37. 24, 25. Falls may wound the soul, bruise the spirit, cause sinkings of heart, dejections of mind; satan may sadly daub and bespatter the poor child of God, and endeavour to persuade him that he is in such a condition that his Father doth not know him—will not own him. The Lord help us to fear such a state, and to watch and pray, that we may stand! Yet the Lord will not cast away his people whom he did foreknow: nor forsake his chosen inheritance: There is balm in Gilead. Jesus is the skilful Physician—he will heal and restore his beloved members—he knows them—he loves them—they are his property. O how should this endear Jesus to our souls! cause us to cleave unto him with full purpose of heart: Embitter sin, and cause us to cry continually, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Psalm 17. 5.

Praise to the goodness of the Lord,
Who rules his people by his word,
And there, as strong as his decrees,
He sets his kindest promises.

Whence then should doubts and fears
arise?

Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?

Slowly, alas, our mind receives

The comforts that our Saviour gives.

APRIL 26.

(1116)

Rejecting in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. Rom. 12. 12.

The gospel brings us from a hopeless into a hopeful state, but not into an independent one. We are never to expect freedom from trials and tribulations in this vale of tears: they lie in our way to the end of our hope—the enjoyment of God in glory. Hope makes the soul joyful, and excites to patience. Tribulations cause a throne of grace to be prized—a covenant God in Christ to be sought unto and delighted in. In the rough waves of difficulties, in the storm of affliction, in the boisterous sea of temptation hope is as an anchor to the soul: When that is cast within the veil the vessel will safely ride out every storm. Though tossed it shall not be driven from its moorings; it keeps the soul safe and steady.

The grace of patience is ranged between the joy of hope and the constant exercise of prayer, as though it could not exist without either, but is supported and strengthened by both. A hopeful soul will be much in prayer: and the more in converse and communion with God, the soul will more thrive in every grace of the Spirit. "Ask and ye shall receive," is the grand charter of heaven. Yea more, lest children grow remiss, be sparing in their addresses, and content themselves with any portion, when the exuberance is necessary, "Ask (saith our munificent Lord) and receive, that your joy may be full." John 15. 11. Sip not at the streams; but drink large draughts at the fountain-head.

Ever remember, christian, the life of sense is contrary to the life of faith. Walking after the flesh, gratifying its lusts, conforming to a sinful world, deadens the life of the soul, indisposes it to prayer, makes hope decline, impatience prevail, and all the graces wither. And can'st thou delight to live at a distance from thy Saviour—without a sense of his peace and love? would'st thou not fear to die in such a frame? "Keep yourselves in the love of God," is an evangelical exhortation, Jude ver. 21.—looking unto Jesus under every circumstance—avoid every thing contrary to love—study to be diligent in those means which may tend to excite and strengthen the liveliness of faith and the comforts of love, the joy of hope, and the patience of the soul. "If ye do these things ye shall never fall." 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Saints, at your Father's heav'nly word,
Give up your comforts to the Lord;
He shall restore what you resign,
Or grant you blessings more divine.

Just in the last distressing hour,
The Lord displays deliver'ing pow'r;
The mount of trials is the place
Where we shall see surprising grace.

Then had the churches rest, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. Acts 9. 31.

The form of godliness without the power, is sufficient to make us saints, good church-men, honest souls in the eyes of the carnal world. But when, by the power of the Spirit, our hearts possess the faith of Jesus, it cannot be hid, but the life of Jesus also will be manifested in our walk and conversation. Then persecution awaits us—the world will hate us—their former esteem for and good opinion of us, will be changed into hatred and opposition. The word of the Lord must be fulfilled, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.” 2 Tim. 3. 12. This is the lot of every disciple; it is a touchstone of faith, and is overruled by our master’s wisdom, for his glory and our spiritual advantage.

These have been the most thriving seasons to the church of God, most prosperous to the souls of disciples: then the love of this world has been most purged from the heart, and the closest fellowship with Jesus most enjoyed.

But is the rage and fury of opposers abated? have we a little more rest and quiet from those, who, at our first conversion to Jesus, vexed and oppressed us? Here a godly jealousy is needful; close examination necessary. Is Jesus still dear to us? do we keep close to him as the beloved of our souls? are the promises of God still precious? and do we stand steady against the smiles of the world, preferring Jesus to all? See, mark the blessed connection between edification of the truth, walking in the fear of the Lord, and enjoying the comforts of the Holy Ghost. So the church of old prospered when rest was given them. These things are inseparable. True saving knowledge of Jesus in the heart, ever discovers itself by a holy, loving, filial fear of the Lord in the life. The more we are edified in the faith, this fear increaseth. Faith and fear are founded in love, and will be accompanied with the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

But though the churches had rest from persecution, still the members were in the body, and satan was active, afflictions and temptations ceased not. In this, nor they, nor we shall ever be exempt in this vale of tears. To endure them, we are taught, is part of our blessedness, James 1. 12. By them we learn many useful lessons of faith, patience, humility and resignation to the will of God, and are made the more to partake of his holiness. So the Holy Ghost sanctifies them to our profit, and enables us to glorify the Lord our God, being cheerful and confident in Jesus’ promise: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” Rev. 3. 10.

But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob: thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Isa. 43. 22.

“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Rom. 11. 2. Zealous professors may become shameful apostates. God’s own children may awfully backslide from him, and sadly decline in their love to him, and service of him. Such a conduct is most base to the best of beings—most ungrateful to the most loving Lord and Saviour—most wounding to the sensible gracious heart. But such wandering sheep shall hear the faithful Shepherd’s voice, and shall return with weeping and supplications. Slighted mercies, forfeited privileges, neglected means of grace, indifference to the cause of Jesus, and growing weary of the Saviour’s ways and service, bear a sad witness against the soul.

A little self-examination will discover, that such an one hath found other lovers; with them he is delighted, and after them he hath gone. If the life of sense prevails against the life of faith, the lusts of the flesh are preferred to spiritual delights; carnal worldly company is more relished than the communion of the saints; fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, is more attended to than fellowship with Jesus: If the private duties of the closet, the public ordinances of God’s house are forsaken: If to all this, there is an indifference and unconcern of soul, Can the solemn charge of our Lord be heard, “Thou hast been weary of me,” without pleading guilty? Be astonished, O heavens, at this! Weary in serving the Lord, may be the christian’s experience through infirmity; but to be weary of the Lord himself, the Lord of every perfection, the God of all mercies, the Father of all consolation, the only Saviour of our souls, our only hope in time, our all in eternity; to be weary of, to grow shy to such a being, O what shall one say! truly love is patient, and prayer powerful; but for the love of the Father, and the intercession of Jesus, such a soul might bear this, have reaped his deserts, and been weary of his punishment in hell. but there is hope—grace reigns—mercy is free—proclamation is made. “O Israel, return, [Such a temper must be changed, or death cannot be hopeful, nor eternity desirable] to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Hosea 14. 1.

Where should my foolish passions rove?

Where can such sweetness be,

As I have tasted in thy love,

As I have found in thee?

Wretch that I am to wander thus

In chase of false delights!

Let me be fastned to thy cross,

Rather than lose thy fight.

Make haste my days to reach the goal,

And bring my heart to rest

On the dear centre of my soul,

My God, my Saviour’s breast.

Then I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Prov. 24. 32.

Observation is the life of understanding. Experience is the joy of faith. Learning good from others harms is true wisdom. Can we look around us among the circle of our professing acquaintance, and not see the awful effects of slothfulness in the ways of God, a supine indolence to the cause of Jesus, and careless indifference, as to the health and prosperity of the soul? It is a very affecting description the Spirit of wisdom presents to our view: "I went by the field of the slothful, [the once seemingly growing and shining professor] and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, [the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches has choked the word," Matt. 13. 22.] and nettles had covered the face thereof; [the rank weeds of corrupt lusts, sensual gratifications, carnal pleasures and delights overspread the life and conduct;] the stone-wall of the vineyard is broken down; [the soul lying open, and unfenced against the incursion of the beasts of prey, satan, the men of this world, carnal company; senseless of its danger, and slothful to all means of deliverance, the poor soul composes itself with:] "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Is not this a striking, though awful likeness? do we not almost daily behold its original? How melancholy the sight! how alarming the conduct! how dreadful the sentence! "So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth [with speed]; and [thy want as an armed man, [without power thou canst not withstand it.] See this, O soul! remember thy calling is to diligence: consider it well. [what sad effects spiritual sloth produce.] Look upon it [as a frame and temper of soul to be constantly dreaded, and earnestly prayed against.] Receive instruction:" "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning:" To what end? To shew what has happened to others, "are examples to us, and for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10. 11, 12.

I love the volumes of thy word;
What light and joy those leaves afford
To souls benighted and distressed!
Thy precepts guide my doubtful way,
Thy fear forbids my feet to stray,
Thy promise leads my heart to rest,

Thy threatenings wake my slumbering eyes,
And warn me where my danger lies;
But 'tis thy blessed gospel, Lord,
That makes my guilty conscience clean,
Converts my soul, subdues my sin,
And gives a free but large reward.

Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Acts 7. 56.

'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.' As the trial and exercise of our day is, so shall our strength be. Saints shall have suffering grace for suffering times. Hours of great outward calamities prove seasons of the greatest abounding of inward consolation. Before Stephen, contrary to nature, fell asleep under a shower of stones, he shall enjoy a supernatural sight of glory. He suffered first for Jesus, he is the first who is favoured with a view of the glorified Jesus in his kingdom. How faithful is the Lord we serve! how great are his compassions! how reviving to the soul is the spiritual sight of him! Whether patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, as believers in all ages, the same Lord was the object of their faith; they were comforted by the same Spirit, whose blessed office is to glorify Jesus in the views of believing souls. True, "no man shall see me and live, saith the Lord." Exod. 33. 20. Even highly-favoured Stephen saw not the essential glory of Jehovah, but through the medium of the man Jesus. Whether with his bodily sight, or in the full visions of faith and the Holy Ghost, he saw the glory of God in the person of the glorified exalted Son of Man Jesus. This discovery fired his soul with heavenly joy, and inflamed his heart with holy transport.

Faith's views of Jesus have a transforming influence upon the soul. While he is beheld, love is communicated. Ascending hearts to Jesus are favoured with descending love from Jesus. Love, received in the heart, cheerfully diffuseth its sweet savour around us. It enlargeth the bowels of compassion, and opens the mouth in prayer for its worst enemies. What hath Jesus done for sinners! how precious is he to those who believe! how should our hearts long for clearer views of him by the Spirit! As in his love, so in his person he is wonderful. He is ever the same, a MAN. He appears in his human form before the throne, interceding for sinners. The same suffering crucified Man; who loved our persons and bore our sins, still lives and pleads our cause, as our triumphant conqueror in our nature over all our enemies. Thus daily conceive of, look to, and embrace in the arms of faith, thy Lord and thy God, O soul, as man and mediator, as having atoned and is now interceding for thee. So mayest thou ever comfortably say, "Into thine hand I commit my Spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Psalm 31. 5.

I love the windows of thy grace
Thro' which my Lord is seen,
And long to meet my Saviour's face
Without a glass between,

● that the happy hour were come
To change my faith to sight!
I shall behold my Lord at home
In a diviner light.

Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of the ground? Isa. 28. 24.

"The Lord of hosts hath decreed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." Isa. 23. 9. Therefore his word sends us to the common transactions in life, that we may gather instruction in humility, and be taught to bow to his sovereignty; every dispute against the latter is a strong evidence of the want of the former. When the mouth is not stopped, but daringly opened against sovereign purposes and eternal decrees, it is an awful sign that the plough of God's law hath not cut deep into the sinner's heart: so that instead of being guilty and speechless, the pride of his nature urges vain pleas against free-grace truths, everlasting love, the finished salvation of Jesus, and the certain glory of all his chosen members.

But verily, as the plowman plows at a proper season, and sows his seed at the appointed time, and as harvest shall not fail; so the church of Christ is "God's husbandry." 1 Cor. 3. 9. By the ministry of the word the Lord plows up the uncultivated ground of unfruitful hearts—he opens and breaks the clods of pride and lust—he casts in the seed of eternal life in the knowledge of Jesus; then the graces of faith, hope, love and holiness take root downward, and spring forth upward.

But alas! the seed is exposed to many dangers; weeds may grow up and choke it; if refreshing showers, the warm sun, or the purifying air is withheld, it will rot, and bring forth no fruit unto perfection. The poor heart is not without its fears, yea is at its wits end at times, lest so it should be. And what can he do? He cannot command the clouds, call forth the sun, or cause the wind to blow. Boasting in self is at an end. Trusting to inherent grace is cut off. Hence the soul is led in humility to see that all things are of God—that if ever he reaps the harvest of eternal life it is wholly and solely owing to his free gift by Jesus—that all present fruitfulness is by the Spirit's energy and influence, in consequence of the Father's love and faithfulness, the Son's perfect work and salvation. Therefore look not so much within, nor around thee as above to Jesus. Doubting disciple, from this inexhaustible fountain hope and encouragement flow. Though all within seems gloomy and distressing; all without opposing and discouraging; yet our God is over all and above all. Ever remember there is as great a necessity for the heart to be deeply rooted in humility downward, as for the pleasing fruits of peace and joy to spring upward. Our heavenly husband knows which is best for us.

That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Rom. 3. 19.

In our natural state we are ever most backward to take guilt to ourselves. Most skilful at self-excuses—most averse to self-examination; because we dread self-condemnation, therefore ever prone to pass judgment at the bar of pride and carnal reason upon the truths of God, because we think they are against us. O what is there in such stout-hearted rebels, who are far from righteousness, to invite down the blessed Spirit to enlighten our minds! It is a special mercy to see the spirituality and extent of God's holy law: though in it we see nothing but justice with a drawn sword, and mercy with a veiled face, yet it cuts off all glorying in the flesh—stops the mouth of pride and arrogance—and leaves the poor sinner under a sense of guilt—and subjects him to the judgment of God. The sound of mercy, how welcome to such! the proclamation of grace, how joyful! the name of Jesus, how precious! the way of salvation by him, how acceptable! How willingly do they desire to be eternally indebted to free-grace? how dead do such become to former legal hopes? Expectation from their fulfilling terms and conditions is cut off—grace freely given—mercy richly bestowed through Jesus becomes the subject of all their hope, the matter of all their glorying. Not, What have I done? how have I behaved? but, what hath Jesus done? what a glorious salvation hath he wrought! 'I, poor sinner, stript of all, now bow to the sovereignty of God—adore his electing-love—admire God's method of salvation—sit silently at the feet of Jesus—dwell on the wonders of his love and sufferings on Calvary's-Mount—most thankfully receive the testimony of Jesus at the hand of the Spirit—and give the ever-gracious THREE all the glory of what I am in time, and of what I hope to be in eternity.'

Thus the law is good if a man use it lawfully. But if the Lamb's wife seeks to the law, as a woman to her husband, to get some comfort from it, and endeavours to get life by obedience to it; verily, this is not continuing a chaste virgin to Jesus. We shall then cease to bring forth fruit unto God; but we shall be, as God complains of Israel of old, "an empty vine, who bringeth forth fruit unto himself;" Hosea 10. 1. we shall grow delighted with ourselves, and imagine we have that within us to talk of and glory in, instead of the work of Jesus, his blood, righteousness, and intercession, &c. But thus saith the Lord, "I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: [this produceth humility in thee] Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Ezek. 16. 63.

Jesus said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. John 11. 4.

It frequently happens, that intervening occurrences seem to contradict the truths of God. Therefore if we judge from sight and appearance, we shall be often deceived. God's word alone is the rule of faith: what he has declared shall certainly come to pass, however repugnant it may seem to carnal reason. Thus our Saviour declares Lazarus's sickness "not to be unto death." Yet he afterwards told his disciples plainly, "Lazarus is dead:" and Jesus found him in the grave, where he had been laid four days: but Jesus, who had power over death and the grave, knew his own intention of raising him, both for the glory of the Father, as well as the glorifying himself. This was the great end of his coming into the world. Therefore in the life, and by the death of Jesus, glory redounds to God in the highest, "peace on earth, and good-will to men."

Did Jesus love Lazarus? did his compassionate eyes drop a tear of affection over his friend's grave? O what an innumerable company of poor sinners did his loving eyes behold, who, like Lazarus, were not only to all appearances past hope, but actually "dead in trespasses and sins!" but he says of them also, "This sickness is not unto death." Eternal death shall not have the dominion over them; but he would get glory to God, and glorify himself in quickening and raising all God's chosen ones, all his dearly beloved members.

On the death of Lazarus "Jesus wept: he groined within himself;" and he cried to his Father. How must the heart of Lazarus be inflamed with love to his dear Lord, for giving him a second life! O believer! the raising thy soul cost thy Saviour not only a sigh, a tear, a groan, a prayer, but agonies, sweats of blood, tortures beyond thought, sufferings beyond expression. His immaculate heart's blood he freely poured forth for our sins, to procure the life, and to obtain the salvation of the soul. Canst thou think of this love without reflecting on thy misery? O hard heart! O cruel unbelief! How little affected with such love, as none but God should shew.

Come, happy souls, approach your God The Father sent his equal Son,
With new melodious songs; To give them life again.

Come, tender to almighty grace Jesus came to heal our wounds;
The tributes of your tongues, And wipe our sorrows dry.

So strange, so boundless was the love He bids us trust his mighty name,
That pity'd dying men, So shall we never die.

Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.

Jer. 45-5.

The glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, every member of the church of Christ in every age were called to self-denial and mortification. Seeing in this there is no difference, all are equally clothed with the same corrupt nature; are men of like passions, and therefore in danger of having their affections attracted from Jesus, by the alluring objects of this present evil world. The holy scripture has recorded a very short chapter of the prophet Baruch's conduct: on reading which we may truly look within, as well as around us, and then look up and cry, "Lord, what is man!" and with astonishment may add, "That thou art mindful of him."

Yea, what is every Baruch, i. e. blessed man, that bends the knee to Jesus, who is even renewed in the Spirit of his mind? Alas! he is still of the earth, earthy—prone to cleave to the dust—ready to seek great things for himself, from the outward objects of time and sense. One would have thought just at a time when the prophet had been reading the dreadful roll, full of mourning, lamentation and woe, which was shortly to come to pass upon the kingdom, this would have entirely curbed every carnal desire after worldly joys, and earthly glory. But no; the life of the flesh is only mortified by the power of the Spirit. Therefore Jeremiah is sent with a loving warning and tender prohibition: Is this a time for self-seeking, instead of thy Master's glory? be wise: know thy station: act in character.

So God makes his dear ministers and people profitable to each other, by a word spoken in due season. While this world is the natural man's choice, his home, his heaven, his glory; for all his happiness centers in it. Jesus' loving hearts, through gracious convictions, find and feel that the things of this life prove hurtful to the health and prosperity of their souls; therefore they mourn under, pray and strive against the earthly-mindedness, the carnality of their affections. This is an evidence of the life of the soul; but all is not right within while we indulge self-seeking instead of Jesus-glorifying views. Jesus is not beheld clearly, enjoyed comfortably, prized chiefly, and sweetly lived upon from hour to hour; while the world is earnestly coveted and eagerly pursued. O what shall it profit a man though he gains the whole world if he loses sweet peace with God, comfortable communion with Jesus, and the joyful fellowship of the Holy Ghost? "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matt. 6: 24.

Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. John 14. 1.

Jesus comforted the heart of a sorrowful widow by restoring her dead son to life again. Could he not also, by the power of his Spirit, console the hearts of his dear disciples, without preaching outward rules and directions to them? Plainly, he will be heard as our prophet. Those disciples who obey the word of his doctrine they shall enjoy the consolations of his love. So it seemeth good to our Lord to teach; so it is necessary for us to believe. Troubles are the common lot of God's dearest children: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Psalm 34. 19. But heart-troubles they feel and groan under which strangers know not of; inward disquietudes which carnal men are utterly free from, and even are oft amazed to hear of; and are ready to hug themselves, and thank God they are not troubled about. Ah, but inward insensibility is a bad sign! But disciples troubles are Jesus' concerns; he has a remedy against them; he will have them comforted under them; but believing in an absolute God will not do this: nay, the glory of his majesty, the greatness of his power, the perfection of his justice, &c. appear in dread array against them. They dare not think of God out of Christ, knowing themselves to be poor sinners; therefore says Jesus, "Believe also in me." Remember the covenant that is established between the Father and me on your account; when thoughts arise in your mind, and your poor hearts are troubled with finding that after all you are still but "unprofitable servants," you see much cause for sorrow, and mourn and complain that there are many things amiss in you; that you do not believe so perfectly, love so comfortably, obey so cheerfully as you wish: Yet ever remember I am your mediator before the throne for you—you stand not in the Father's love for your works sake, but the Father is ever well pleased with me; and loves you, and is well pleased with you for my sake; do not distress your poor hearts, and sorrow as without hope, but believe in me and be comforted: You have no sin but my blood dearly atoned for—you want no perfection but what my righteousness supplies—you can stand in need of no holiness and conformity to me but what the blessed Spirit bestows—thus believe on me as your living head—thus daily look on yourselves as my dear members—thus live on me and honour me as your Lord, and glorify me as your only Saviour. This is to obey Christ's command—thus is the troubled heart comforted—this is our sweetest privilege. We should be concerned to make this our daily employ on earth: Shortly all our troubles and sorrows shall end, for, "we shall meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord: Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. 4. 17, 18.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Heb. 6. 18.

It is the glory of the gospel, that it reveals glad tidings to hopeless helpless sinners. It finds nothing in us to intitle us to the favour of God: But it brings all hope and consolation to the soul; and all is founded upon the most absolute certainty, and the strongest assurance of an immutable God. And as verily as it is impossible for the God of truth to lie or forswear himself, so is it as impossible for any of the heirs of promise to perish. Such is the blessed hope set before us. Happy souls, who have fled to Jesus for refuge, and have laid hold of this hope! Hence-forward nothing but consolation, strong consolation, ariseth to such poor sinners from the word of truth. This hope can never fail them. Whatever within or without fluctuates or changes, this never can.

This hope is ever to be held fast, even though appearances wear a gloomy aspect, sense of comfort declines, feelings of joy seem dead, and all hope from within seems to forsake us. But, Father, thy mercies never die, thy counsel shall stand, thy oath cannot fail. Hope in this is as an anchor to the soul. Whatever storms or tempests are without, or when the swelling waves of corruptions lift up their voice within, yet the God of hope is mightier than all, and the christian hope ariseth above all; therefore is it sure and steady. It is cast out of sight, within the vail. By this blessed hope of the gospel, poor sin-condemned, distressed sinners, are kept steady to Jesus, and find a comfortable and secure refuge. And that precious Spirit, who shews them their danger, and guides them to safety, then causeth the joy of hope to spring up in their souls. They enjoy hope in themselves concerning their own state towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ, even a good hope through grace: And they are made to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. O this is a comforting operative grace! it leads the soul to expect all that God has promised, even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant of grace, which flow to us from the life and death of Jesus: All are secured by the immutable counsel and solemn oath of an unchangeable God both for time and eternity. And as a fruit and evidence that it is a holy godly hope, it influences the soul in obedience to all the Lord hath commanded. "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself even as God is pure." 1 John 3. 3.

Thus Jesus is the only and alone object through whom God reveals the hope of salvation. His work is finished. It is our happiness to believe this, and to rejoice in the hope it affords us. Christ is therefore ever to be looked to, and daily trusted in; and the more thou art exercised in this way, so much the more inward hope and joyful consolation is experienced in the soul. "My hope is in thee." Psal. 39. 7.

And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? Luke 24. 32.

When the fire of divine love burns in the heart, disciples cannot refrain speaking of it to each other. But how transient are the frames of God's dearest children? Too apt are the strongest believers to live upon sense and feeling, instead of faith and promises. The former may, and often doth fail in enjoyment, but the latter is founded upon the firm immutable foundation of the God of truth; therefore is sure and infallible.

These disciples of the Lamb were just before in dejection and despondency. The time was come for resurrection comfort, but their Lord did not appear as they expected, therefore they were sad. He was with them, but they knew him not. Jesus upbraids them with "O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Then he expounds the scriptures concerning himself. Presently the fire kindles in their hearts, and they spake to each other of the holy fervour, and heavenly joy they felt. But it seems that it was soon past, and gone before they spoke of it. "DID NOT OUR HEARTS BURN?" How sweet WAS IT? what ravishing moments WERE those? Doubtless they could have wished them to have continued always. And so they should if the Master saw good. If Jesus knew it was best, every one of his disciples should enjoy hearts ever warm, and ever glowing with the heavenly flame of divine love. It verily is sweet to sense, and those who have been "baptized with the Holy Ghost, and fire" of divine love will speak of it to the glory of Jesus, and long after more lasting enjoyment of it. But this best wine is reserved for the last. It won't be long, disciple, before thou shalt drink thy fill, and that without danger of being intoxicated. But thou must go to Jerusalem first, and wait the promise as these disciples did. And thou must go to the same place where they now are, before thy thirsty soul is perfectly satisfied. May it be our present concern, that we give the Saviour no cause to upbraid us for folly and unbelief in not abiding by the prophets, promises and the testimony of Jesus! We are to live upon the truth of the word, and not upon fire and feeling within. We may be sure the former cannot disappoint us; but the latter may deceive us. But yet, disciples should ever be on their guard, against such who deny the Saviour's blessing, experienced by the consolations of his Spirit, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Be not put off with dry notions and speculative systems, which are like the pale light of the waning moon, but administer not the animating warmth and enlivening heat of the meridian sun. For saith Jesus, "The words that I spake unto you, they are spirit and they are life." John 6. 63.

I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. Rom. 7. 21.

The heathens in their sacrifices were wont to cry out, "Keep at a distance, O ye profane." But the worshippers withheld not their offerings, lest the unhallowed should be the more polluted, or that their sacrifices should be defiled by them. For the godly consolation, edification, and establishment of sanctified souls, it seemed meet for the Spirit of wisdom that the apostle Paul should leave his experience in the epistle to the Romans, where he confesses himself a poor sinner, yet a holy and happy believer in Jesus. Hereby to many precious souls Jesus hath been made more infinitely precious, while sin has been viewed as more exceeding sinful, and themselves made to sink lower in humility at the feet of sovereign grace. Let those who dare advert to this blessed testimony, for contrary purposes, remember the Judge is at the door. Shortly they must account, if they turn the food of God's word to the poison of their own souls.

Fools make a mock of sin, while godly souls groan under the burden of indwelling corruption. The former's conduct is an awful proof of their state. The sorrows of the latter is a certain evidence of the spiritual life and sanctification of their souls—being born again of the Spirit; to do good is the delight of their hearts. Being living members of Jesus by faith, they love conformity to their head. Being sons of God by adoption, it is their joy to love, obey and please their heavenly Father in all things. Perfection in holiness they aspire after. Intire freedom from sin they comfortably hope for. But the God of truth will not suffer his own elect to be deceived, and to think themselves what they are not, nor ever will be in the flesh, perfectly freed from sin; for the old man with his affections and lusts is ever near, ever present with them. Their best thoughts are often interrupted and diverted—their most holy desires are often damped and discouraged—their best actions are seldom, if ever, free from the bold intrusion of unwelcome guests from the world, flesh, and the devil. "I would be wholly devoted to the Lord, saith the gracious soul; all my powers and faculties, time and talents, all that I possess and enjoy, would I wholly (as assisted) freely and willingly dedicate in love to Jesus." Scarce the pleasing thought is conceived, but the evil of pride injects, What a rare name will this acquire me! How shall I be admired and shine as somebody in the christian world? O this sinks the christian with shame, and causes him to hide his head with holy blushing. But let not this discourage thee. Paul abated nothing of his zeal for God's glory and doing good on this account. If a partaker of his experience, thou wilt also follow his steps. "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land [of comfort, and in truth] thou shalt be fed." Psalm 37. 3.

While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. Gen. 8. 22.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4. 8. By faith we view the declarations of Jehovah, as the blessings of a father's love. The returning seasons, the revolving periods of time declare the glory of our heavenly Father. While the christian meditates upon and gratitude inspires his heart for the innumerable blessings of time, yet a more noble subject demands the contemplation of his soul. Happy for us when temporal blessings are enjoyed as covenant mercies, and are sanctified to us in Christ Jesus. We see and adore the sovereignty of God in appointing times and seasons; the immutability of his will is the law by which they are governed; and when the fixed period shall come, all nature shall be reduced to its primitive nothing, and time shall be swallowed up in a never-ending eternity. Happy soul, who is taught the displays of grace from the images of nature; who bows to the sovereignty of love, rejoices in the covenant of grace, and rests upon the immutability of God's purposes and promises in Christ Jesus; knowing that as in nature, so in the kingdom of grace, seed-time and harvest shall not fail to God's church and people, because of "the everlasting covenant which is ordered in all things and sure."

There is a time for the immortal seed of the word to be sown in every elect soul. This is experienced by the seed striking root in conviction; by its springing up in faith, desire and love to Jesus. And because the Sun of righteousness ever lives and shines upon his members, they shall reap an harvest of eternal glory. Chilling cold, and winter's blasts may succeed the summer of love and warmth of affection. Nights of darkness, temptation and affliction may follow days of peace, joy, and consolation. These various seasons and changes will pass upon, and be experienced by believing souls "while the earth remaineth." That is, so long as our earthly sensual nature continues; but it is sentenced to dissolution: we must leave it on this side Jordan, when we shall see it no more as an enemy for ever, but in the presence of Jesus the soul shall have fulness of joy, and the body shall be raised a glorious body, to enjoy the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore. There shall be no night of darkness, no chill of affections, no winter of distress. But at present this is our sweet consolation of every one of his beloved members. Christ saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14. 19.

Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck. 1 Tim. 1. 19.

"He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." Mark 13. 13. So the Master taught; so disciples believe. By perseverance in the faith the crown shall be enjoyed. So glory perfects what grace begins—God's power is faith's confidence—God's truth is faith's assurance—faith's author and faith's finisher is Jesus. Therefore, "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger;" faith the son of faith and patience, Job 17. 9. So "the topstone" of finished salvation "shall be brought forth with shoutings; crying, Grace, grace." Zech. 4. 7.

Such are the immutable truths of the covenant of grace; the gospel of grace; and the God of grace. Whatever legal spirits do, gracious souls will ever draw gracious influences from the safety and security of grace. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10. 12. Take heed that he be not high-minded, and trust in uncertain riches that he fancies he hath obtained by his own faithfulness, creature-ability, and natural free-will; not being led to trust in the living God, who giveth all things. Many such self-sanctified saints have and do daily fall away, and have made terrible shipwreck of their fancied faith, self-applauding inherent righteousness, and have perished in the gulph of vain-glory and presumption. Therefore see to it, disciple, that thou holdest fast, and contendest earnestly for the faith once delivered to God's saints. The doctrines of eternal election to salvation, according to the everlasting covenant love of the ever glorious Trinity, a finished salvation by the atonement and full justification by the perfect righteousness of Jesus; and final perseverance in holiness by the Spirit of truth. Hold them fast, not in word only, but in power, as the essential truths of Jehovah, as the very life and joy of thy soul. So shalt thou have and keep a good conscience sprinkled from guilt by the blood of Jesus; and a good testimony of it by the Spirit of grace, through faith; knowing and "being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work [of faith and love in thee] will perform it unto the day of Christ." Philip. 1. 6.

Amidst a thousand snares I stand,
Upheld and guarded by thy hand,
Thy words my fainting soul revive,
And keep my dying faith alive.

Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins;
The work that Wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes.

And for this cause I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth. John 17. 19.

From the view of a reconciled God, an interceding Mediator, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, believers have assured confidence, through faith, of attaining the highest degree of holiness their souls are capable of. In this, and every other hope, our eyes are ever to be fixed, steadily fixed on the work of Jesus. Never imagine that the Saviour hath only shed his precious blood to procure pardon, and wrought out a righteousness for justification, and hath committed to thee a stock of inherent grace, which thou art to husband and improve to sanctify thy soul. This is not sanctification through the truth. This notion leads to pride, nourishes in members a spirit of independence of the head; it makes faith void, and vacates the office and influences of the Holy Ghost; therefore is an awful mistake, a dangerous error.

But as all the first-born under the law, were sanctified to the Lord, Exod. 13. 2. so also were the priests sanctified and consecrated, ch. 30. 30. So Jesus, "being the first-born of his many brethren," himself the priest, the sacrifice to offer for them, he set himself apart, and was consecrated to this very work. Agreeably to the law of truth, the covenant of truth, and the grace of truth, "Jesus suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people." Heb. 13. 12. And through the same truth, his members, which were yet unborn, and having done neither good or evil, were to be sanctified, or separated from being unholy and impure; "through the faith of Jesus they are sanctified to God, as vessels meet for the master's use." 2 Tim. 2. 21. So believers are said to be "sanctified in Christ Jesus;" 1 Cor. 1. 2. and they are "chosen of God from the beginning, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2. 13. Thus, by union with the head Jesus, holiness is communicated to believing members, by the Spirit of truth, through faith in the truth; their love to holiness, their desire after the increase of it, their grief for what is contrary to it, is a clear and full evidence of the sanctification of their souls. All is from Jesus, who saith, "Abide in me;" separate from me, ye can do nothing; but being one with me, and sanctified and holy in me, so shall ye, by the faith of me, "bring forth fruit unto holiness, and the end shall be everlasting life."

Rom. 6. 22.

But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Heb. 13. 16.

Through the artful wiles of satan, the corrupt reasonings of deceitful nature, and the doctrines of false teachers, disciples are in danger of errors on the right hand and on the left. Because good works do not merit God's favour, and intitle us to his acceptance, therefore, say some, we cannot do any thing that is good and well-pleasing in the sight of God. So if satan cannot blind us by false hopes and legal confidences, he strives to poison our minds with detestable licentious notions, dishonourable to Jesus, contrary to faith, subversive of love, and destructive of the holiness and peace of the gospel. But when Jesus is beheld, and rejoiced in as our sacrifice and atonement for sin, as our beloved, in w^hom our persons are accepted; "By him we are made priests unto God." He is our altar, on which our sacrifices are offered, and which consecrate our gifts. So we are bound by the silken cords of love—so we are exhorted to do good, and to please our gracious God and loving Father.

Shame to us, that we ever neglect this. The exhortation reminds of the danger. God hath not forgotten to be gracious to us. Jesus never intermits in his suit for us. Shall we forget our duty, and neglect at any time to do good on earth? not study daily to please him, who is our portion, our all in time and eternity? Dost the glorious Jehovah condescend to assure us, I am well-pleased with your beneficence, your communicative goodness to my creatures, and your brethren for my sake? and shall we ever be unmindful of, and indifferent about this matter? Forbid it, Lord! animate us with more of the fire of love! To live without prayer and praise, argues insensibility and ingratitude—not to study to glorify God in our actions, shews the want of love—and where the Spirit of prayer, praise, love and obedience is wanting, where, alas, is our evidence that we are children of the gracious God, members of a compassionate Saviour, and influenced by the Spirit of love?

Thron'd on a cloud our judge shall come,
Bright flames prepare his way,
Thunder and darkness, fire and storm,
Lead on the dreadful day.

Now gather all my saints (he cries)
That are at peace with God,

By the Redeemer's sacrifice,
Who seal'd it with his blood.

Their faith and works brought forth to
light

Shall make the world confess,
My sentence of reward is right,
And heav'n adore my grace.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust : quicken thou me according to thy word. Psal. 119. 25.

One would dread that state most of all others, which St. Paul describes "being past feeling." Ephes. 4. 19. True, there is this alleviation, such are insensible of their deplorable condition. But if the great trumpet of the gospel awakes not the soul in this life to spiritual sense and feeling, verily the loud archangels trumpet will awaken it to hear its awful sentence and feel its dreadful doom at the last day. O what a miracle of grace to be quickened to know ones misery, to feel ones wants, to believe the remedy, and cry for relief! This blessed work is not of the will of the flesh. No man can quicken his own soul. It is the sovereign work of almighty power. It is equally ascribed to the loving Father, the redeeming Son, and the sanctifying Spirit, John 5. 21. and 6. 63. Therefore gracious souls give all the glory to the ever-blessed Trinity. Free will is the child of pride, it dwells in the heads of the almost christians, and is only boasted of by the enemies of truth.

"I am come, that my children might have life," saith Jesus. He quickneth the dead in trespasses and sins; and then they cry to him to have life more abundantly. Here is the wisdom of heaven-born souls; they deny themselves of the vain pleasures, carnal delights, and sensual gratifications of this world. They know these things oppose the life, interrupt the peace, and damp the joy of their souls. Their only happiness centers in Jesus—in life and love communicated from him. Therefore they study to avoid such things as are contrary to his mind and will. And as they too often find a cleaving to dust, to the sensible, earthly, vain enjoyments of this world, this alarms them—it is a burden and grief to them. They pour out their complaints to their beloved Jesus, with, "Master, let it not be thus. Quicken my drooping spirit. Enliven my declining heart. Cheer my languishing soul, according to the word of thy grace, the truth of thy promises." Here is the blessed confidence of faith. His word is our plea. By that we have assurance of being heard and answered. The precepts of his word teach us his will; and we cannot feel a want, but God's word promises to supply. Therefore that is the warrant of faith, light to direct our feet; and so also it is our best directory for prayer. So Christ prays for all his. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." John 17. 17.

My soul at times cleaves to the dust;
Lord, give me life divine;

From vain desires and ev'ry lust
Turn off these eyes of mine.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his blood, suffered without the gate. Heb.

13. 12.

Sin viewed in the glass of God's holy law, fills the soul with terror, works wrath in the conscience, and leaves the sinner under the curse without hope. But while the infinitely precious sacrifice of Jesus is beheld, sin appears exceeding sinful—the sinner is truly humbled—the heart is melted into sorrow—sin is loathed—Christ is cleaved to—and hope springs up in the sin-distressed conscience.

In the tabernacle of old, as there were no windows in it, a lamp was to burn always, that the house of God might not at any time be in darkness: this the Lord ordained unto the children of Israel, *Exod. 27. 20.* As the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth, we see Jesus, who is the altar, the sacrifice and the priest, by and through whom we are sanctified. This truth is to be kept daily burning bright in the lamp of faith, in the temple of the heart. The Man Jesus, upon whom all the sins of the elect were laid, was made a curse for them; he cheerfully devoted himself, his holy body, his precious blood, his innocent soul, as a sin-offering for them in the great day of atonement. “By his one offering he hath for ever perfected all them that are sanctified;” that is, separated by the choice of the Father as the objects of his love. They are all consecrated to God by the blood of Jesus.

As the bodies of the beasts, under the law, were burnt without the camp, and their blood brought into the holy of holies, and sprinkled on the mercy-seat; so our dear and ever precious Jesus suffered all the inexpressible agonies of soul and body, from the fire of God's wrath, due to our sin; bore all the scandal, curse and reproach of it, “without the gate of the city,” as an alien and out-cast of the people. His own most precious blood, having once purged, expiated, and taken away the guilt of sin, and made perfect reconciliation for his people: it ever speaks in their behalf, and pleads their cause before the throne; averts all wrath from them, and obtains all blessing for them. Being thus consecrated, every believer is a priest unto God—he is encouraged to draw nigh to God with confidence of access—and it is his high and peculiar honour, “to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” *1 Pet. 3. 5.*

We see the blood of Jesus shed,
Whence all our comforts rise;

The sinner views th' atonement made,
And loves the sacrifice.

The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand, [or be established]. Isa. 32. 8.

We all naturally act with selfish and mercenary views, because we are under the legal covenant, "Do this and live." Hence saith one, 'If doing righteousness and performing good works will not justify and save me, as good fit still and do nothing, no matter how wicked I am.' Saith another, 'To be sure, we are justified by faith only, but then I must fulfil the terms and conditions of the gospel, for my holiness and obedience secures my salvation.' Such poor creatures reason carnally; their principles are only selfish; God is not served at all, but pride and self are at the bottom of all they do: to establish a righteousness of their own is their chief aim. The glory of God is not sought. His grace is overlooked. Jesus is depreciated in his work and office, as though all his toils and sufferings, holy life and bitter death, had only procured salvation upon a better bargain and easier terms for us. Such principles are servile, base and dishonourable to a God of grace and love. Vain the talk of such working for God. They do nothing for God, but to earn something from God for themselves. Take away the idol SELF, and all working is at an end with them.

But the liberal soul acts from gracious principles, and deviseth liberal things. He sees all salvation is of free grace and free gift by Jesus. He is our all, he hath done all, suffered all, obeyed in all things, prevails for all things, and makes all effectual to the soul's perfect, complete and final salvation. "The Saviour is in mine eye; he is in mine heart. He is my alpha and omega, my first hope and my last stay. My views are to his glory. O when I deserved nothing but hell, Love, electing, everlasting Love looked on me with pity, and was manifested to me through Jesus by the word and Spirit. Therefore is it I long, I love, I delight daily to glorify the ever-gracious and ever-loving triune God. I cheerfully devote my all to him, who hath done all for me, who hath loved me and given himself for me. My life of faith, of hope, of love, of holiness, centers in Jesus, and is from him. If I have but a cup of cold water to give, I give it in love and gratitude to him." Such are the generous sentiments of the liberal soul. And, saith Wisdom, "by liberal things he shall stand." Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. He shall be established on the firm foundation of eternal truth, against the power and subtlety of Satan, and all the human systems and precarious schemes of man's devising. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. 2. 19.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2 Cor. 5. 19.

The only living and true God, the great and essentially glorious Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit is manifested to sinners, as dwelling in the man Christ Jesus. This is the peculiar and precious truth of the gospel. A glorious mystery, known only to believing souls. All other pretended knowledge of God is but vain speculation, and pompous ignorance; which dwells in men of corrupt minds destitute of the truth. But the new-born soul draws all his comfort, peace, joy, and holiness from this inexhaustible fountain of truth and consolation. From hence ariseth his love to God and delight in him. He beholds God, in Christ, loving and embracing poor sinners of the human race. God is well pleased with them, and delighteth over them to do them good.

Thus God and man unite in the one man Christ Jesus; in this faith only is the mind of a christian easy and happy; for the cause of all distress and sorrow is taken away. Amazing grace! wonderful love! Canst thou read it? canst thou believe it without transport and joy? God is perfectly reconciled; he doth not impute trespasses. Unto whom? Verily, the world, the elect world of Gentiles as well as Jews; ALL sinners of the fallen race whom the Father hath given to the Son Christ Jesus. God is reconciled to them. In faith and love they shall be reconciled to him; to his covenant transactions, electing love, justifying grace, scheme of salvation, and hope of eternal life by Jesus only. As the Father gave their persons, so he imputed their sins to Jesus—he bore them away—God chargeth not trespasses to them—they are free from sin, as viewed by God in Christ. To this truth the Spirit bears witness, through the faith of Jesus. So, believer, thou art to reckon of thyself. Though black as hell, polluted with guilt, defiled with sin, yet in Christ “thou art all fair, without spot;” fully reconciled to God, and standest without trespasses before him. What a free access hast thou ever open to God! what cause for triumph in him and love to him! what assured hope of eternal enjoyment of him! O my soul, what reward shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies!

Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;

His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.

While many on their works rely,
Others of wisdom boast,
I love th' incarnate mystery,
And there I fix my trust.

So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him, [or chase him away].
Isa. 59. 19.

When a poor sinner knows what human nature is, and sees his brethren and companions after the flesh, "living without Christ and without God in the world;" making a mock at sin, and ridiculing the truths and ways of Jesus; and finds his own heart touched with a holy loving fear of the Lord: then he is ready to cry out, Whence is this? He can only say, Grace reigneth; the Sun of righteousness hath risen upon me. So, Lord, it seemeth good in thy sight—I have not deserved this—thou hast spoken in truth, and fulfilled in faithfulness. So thy word runs—so thy gospel is glorified, free as the sun, powerful as the wind. Jehovah's SHALLS are his people's triumphs.

But as sure as the fear of the Lord shall be in their hearts, so also shall the enemy oppose them; for if he dare plead with the Saviour, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered." Isa. 49. 24. Verily he will follow after his once seized prey, and strive to regain his ransomed captive: yea he will challenge the poor sinner as being his property. One would be ready to ask, Is it not strange that the loving almighty Saviour suffers the enemy, like a surly dog, to snap and snarl at his dear children, and be ready to tear the victuals out of their hands, and peace and love out of their hearts? No: it cannot be otherwise in our present state; for we are clothed with an earthly, sensual, devilish nature, to which satan has easy access.

Humble souls have little reason to complain that they have not known so great a degree of wrath, nor have been terrified with such dreadful apprehensions of hell and damnation as some others. O rather love and praise Jesus, if thy soul is brought to cleave to him in faith, and choose him as thy Saviour and thy all, than wish to have the enemy let loose upon thy soul. But if this is the case, he shall not go beyond the length of his chain. His power is thy Father's permission. He may terrify with wrath, but it shall issue in love. Yea though he should, like a powerful deluge, come in and distress with blasphemous injections, horrible thoughts, perplexing fears, and sentence and pronounce hell and destruction to be thy doom, even then thou art safe. The Saviour's power is thy shield; "and the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard"—Jesus lifted up upon the Cross; to him thou shalt look and be saved; satan shall see it and flee.

If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.
Exod. 33. 15.

Happy for us if this was our address to the Lord under every enterprise; how many distresses and difficulties should we avoid? how much more peaceful and comfortable should we be in our journey through life? It is a blessed thing to have an especial eye to God's presence, as well as to be looking to his providence. The Lord may permit his children to succeed in their schemes and undertakings in the course of his providence, when he doth not accompany their souls with his favour and presence. Yea, believer, canst thou not see in many of thy ways wherein thou hast been permitted to go, that they have proved the very means of losing the sweet sense of thy Lord's presence? whatever outward profit or pleasure thou hast gained, verily thou must confess to have sustained an inward loss. How doth it behove every disciple of Jesus to "consider his ways." It is wisdom, through the grace of the Spirit, daily to reflect, what is the tendency of my present pursuit? what is my chief aim? what can I expect from the end of it? am I going to gratify the flesh in pleasing diversions and carnal delights? Stop one moment. Consider! canst thou expect the presence of thy God and Saviour? canst thou lift up thy believing heart in prayer to Jesus to accompany thee? certainly if it is not right to ask nor expect his spiritual presence to go with thy soul, surely THERE it is unlawful for thee to go. If thou canst not PRAY in faith, canst thou GO in faith? O remember the love of thy Saviour, who died to redeem thee from this present evil world. Call to mind that joy and pleasure which is experienced from a sweet sense of his love and presence; and think how cutting to thy heart, how grieving to thy Spirit, if under thy vain indulgence Jesus should put this question, "Disciple, lovest thou me?"

It is related of a christian, of whom satan had taken possession and greatly terrified and distressed her soul, that on his being asked how he dared to enter into a child of God? He replied, "I found her on my own ground, at the play-house; therefore I challenge her as my servant." Whether the story be true or not the moral is good.

Not earth, nor all the sky
Can one delight afford,
No, not a drop of real joy
Without thy presence, Lord.

Thou art the sea of love
Where all my pleasures roll,
The circle where my passions move,
And centre of my soul.

Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong band, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. Isa. 40. 10.

What was foretold in prophecy, is fulfilled in the faith and experience of saints. Here are two notes of attention. "Behold;" it highly concerns thee—take special notice. When the Lord God, our Immanuel Jesus, came to his temple, he found the beautiful building in sad disorder; his spiritual worship lost; and "his house of prayer turned into a den of thieves." Behold, with a strong hand and stretched-out arm, with no weapon, but an insignificant scourge of small cords, did he drive the multitude from the temple! Amazing miracle! The meek Lamb is also "the lion of the tribe of Judah." So he comes not only with a strong hand, but against the strong, as some learned render it. So again, behold he taketh possession of the temple of his people's hearts. This temple he finds in woful plight. All the powers of earth and hell are engaged against him. "The strong man armed keeps possession." But precious, powerful Jesus, casts out satan, enters by his love, and rules by his Spirit, where satan reigned. But he comes not by power only, but by grace also; behold, he brings his reward with him. He clothes the naked soul with the robe of his righteousness—He feeds the hungry soul with good things—He giveth them his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink. Then how do their souls pant after Jesus? how do they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and cry and pray, "Lord, increase our faith, that we may eat as thy friends, and drink larger draughts, and be more abundantly satisfied with thy love."

Thus our Lord God rewards his people with the fruits of his own toils, and the labour of his own finished work and salvation; even with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, quietness of heart, consolation of soul, assurance of love. But, O Jesu, cries the poor sinner, "What a vile, sinful, carnal, earthly-minded wretch am I still by nature?" Fear not, faith Jesus, thou art called to look unto me. Behold, "my work is before me." Have I vanquished the powers of death and hell for thee, and can I not conquer sin in thee, and subdue thy flesh under thee? Was his blood the price of thy soul, and the atonement of thy sins? Then must thou wait in faith for the total destruction of the last enemy sin and death, at his second coming; when in the triumph of thy soul thou shalt proclaim the perfect victory of Jesus, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, &c." Rev. 5. 12.

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. Prov. 23. 26.

Many are the competitors for the heart of man. And though our dear Father and best Friend lovingly calls for the free-will offering of this precious jewel, yet we are foolishly inclined to trust it in the hands of our worst enemies. This pleasing world, with all its gay scenes of happiness and joy, naturally attracts our affections, enchants our mind, and bewitches our senses; so that we love it dearly, devote our hearts to it chearfully, and dread the very thoughts of leaving it.

"Thou shalt have no other God but me," saith Jehovah. We readily own the duty, and decry the wickedness of worshipping an idol, though all the while we are serving the god of this world, but he has blinded our eyes, and we see it not. The grace of God, though sovereign in its operations, yet acts not by force and compulsion as upon meer machines, destroying our will, and dragging men (as some please in contempt to assert) to heaven by the hair of the head. No; the service of our Lord is perfect freedom. He loves a chearful giver. Glory to his rich grace, he opens the eyes of our understanding, to know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of his glory, Eph. 1. 18. And when we see Jesus as our portion, our treasure, then we willingly and chearfully devote our hearts to him. Is the miser's gold his god? does it captivate his heart and affections? why so? Because he sees that in it which suits his disposition, and excites his pleasures. So of every other idol suited to nature and sense. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also: So spiritual affections can only be happy from spiritual objects. The heart can only be happy in God, when chearfully given up to him in faith and love. This is the very essence of vital godliness.

Therefore the Father of Spirits invites us to spiritual joys. "I know my children, in your present state, clothed with flesh, you have many lovers which would rival me in your affections, but chearfully devote your heart to me. Let your eyes be upon my ways. Consider my love to you. I gave my beloved Son to die for you. My Spirit hath called you to behold what manner of love is this. It is my good pleasure to give you a kingdom in glory: therefore, in love for my glory and your comfort, I demand your heart as a free-will offering upon earth." O where is the generous, faithful, grateful soul, but in ecstacy of love will cry out, Give the power to do what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt?

But he giveth more grace. James 4. 6.

It is a sure mark that the true grace of God, by Jesus Christ, is conceived in the heart, when the cry of the soul is for more grace. Thus there is an harmony between the Father's promises and the children's wants. God giveth more grace: I daily need more, saith the sensible soul. "He that drinketh of the water of life, saith Jesus, shall never thirst again." He shall never thirst after any other fountain; he shall seek to no other spring but ME. There is no grace, favour, or good will from God to sinners but what is by Jesus, through him, in him, and communicated from him. Here is the believer's mercy; he has no stock of grace stored up in his own heart to live upon; but all the kindness and love of God, towards him is treasured up in Jesus. Here is the humility of believers; they come, like Joseph's brethren, to Jesus, who is their elder Brother, for every supply; out of his fulness they receive grace upon grace. Jesus is an inexhaustible storehouse, therefore his members cannot want. God the Father gave them grace at first in Christ Jesus—he called them by his sovereign grace—he justified them fully by grace—he saves them daily by grace—he sanctifies them freely by grace—he comforts them continually by his grace—and he will glorify them according to the exceeding riches of his grace. Thus all is of grace, freely given to and richly bestowed upon poor sinners.

I know there are often reasonings in thine heart and in mine, and in every humbled sinner's, "What suitable returns do I make? what reward shall I give unto the Lord for all his blessings of grace? O what a poor, unloving, ungrateful wretch am I! how do I requite the Lord my God?" Such is the genuine language of gracious hearts. The aboundings of grace make self hateful, and sin abominable: "Not rather as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come, whose damnation is just." Rom. 3. 8. Thou man of God, in the presence of a heart-searching judge before whom thou must shortly appear, how wilt thou answer this question, "Shall I continue in sin that grace may abound?" doth not thy loving heart cry out in emotion, "God forbid?"

'Tis not by works of righteousness,
Which our own hands have done;
But we are sav'd by sov'reign grace,
Abounding thro' God's Son.

Rais'd from the dead we live anew;
And justify'd by grace,
We shall appear in glory too,
And see our Father's face.

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. Psalm 55. 5.

Such was the mournful complaint of David; yea of Jesus too, the root and offspring of David. "Lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham the father of the faithful." Gen. 15. 12. So the Lord suffers his dearest children to be distressed; though it is their privilege, and they are again and again exhorted to "rejoice in the Lord, always." Phil. 4. 4. Under such exercises, let not disciples entertain hard thoughts of the God of love, but ever remember they are heightened by our adversary. Least of all should humble followers of the Lamb judge themselves not to be true converts, because they have not experienced such dreadful terrors of hell and damnation in their conscience as some talk of.

It is an unscriptural notion, the word of God lays down no such rule, as if the soul must be under such deep convictions of horror, must be as it were shook over the very mouth of hell, as a mark of true conversion to Jesus. Innumerable instances are there of persons crying out under dreadful horrors of wrath and damnation, as though hell itself was let loose upon them for a season; but yet after all, being still unclean and filthy, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow to her wallowing in the mire," they have turned back to their old courses.

Thanks to the loving Spirit, he doth convince of sin, not as a tormentor, merely to terrify with wrath and hell, but as a COMFORTER to testify of Jesus and salvation. He opens the eyes of our understanding, to see our lost state and wretched condition, and he gives us to see the hope of our calling, &c. Eph. 1. 18. "And the fruits of the Spirit are love, peace, joy, &c." Gal. 5. 22. He works effectually; he teaches us by the law to despair in nature and self, and revives and comforts with hope and assurance of full and perfect salvation in Jesus. But this is the case, while the Spirit of truth sows the good seed of the kingdom in the heart, Satan, the enemy sows tares to spring up and choke it. He works upon our unbelief, practises his devilish art upon our carnal reason, and suggests, that God is an implacable enemy—the meek Lamb is a devouring lion—the gospel is a cunningly devised fable, or requires such hard terms, which we can never fulfil; therefore misery, wrath, and hell must be our doom. He is ever an implacable adversary to salvation by Jesus, through sovereign love and distinguishing grace. Such terrors are to be prayed against rather than coveted; for David knew whereby they came, says he, "Because of the enemy and the oppression of the wicked-one," ver. 3. Praised be our dear Lord for that precious promise, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him," and put him to flight. Isa. 59. 19.

The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Psalm 84. 11.

Vulgar minds have but very contracted ideas of the magnitude of that glorious luminary the sun. The most knowing of the children of men form but very inadequate notions of the nature and properties of that grand source of light and heat. We daily see his power and feel his influence. This he incessantly sheds upon the whole creation FREELY. How vain and arrogant would he be deemed, who should pretend he could procure the cheering light and comforting warmth of the sun? Dwells there, in the breast of man, a thought, that he can procure the light of grace; or by his doings intitle himself to the comforts of salvation from Jehovah? Yes: so vain, so arrogant is that vile worm, that weak creature, proud fallen man. By sin, how stript of all but shame! by pride, "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." 2 Thess. 2. 4. But grace, like the streaming light of the sun, freely and powerfully sheds its benign, humbling, comforting influence upon the ungodly and unworthy. So the Lord enlightens and renews the soul of man—makes it fruitful to his glory—and with his almighty arm shields and defends the new-born, heavenly replenished soul, from the violent attacks of every foe. Grace as well as glory are his free gifts.

Children of God, members of Jesus, how safe! salvation, how secure! For salvation is all of grace; free favour, unmerited love, unconditional election; not earned by any doings of ours, but freely given by promise. Glory, not procured by conditions, but freely bestowed through Jesus. See thy portion, believer—read it with joy—dwell on it with triumph. Here is a redundancy of promises; the Lord will give, will give freely, "without money and without price," all things, every thing for his own glory, and his children's good. Love overflows all bounds; gives the fullest vent to its gracious disposition. No good thing will the Lord withhold. From whom? See the character of those, upon whom the sun of grace hath shined. Is it thine? They are not in angelic purity, or sinless perfection; but upright, sincere in heart with Jesus, chaste virgins, married to him in faith and love, who see all in him, that "he is their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." They choose him for their only king to reign in them and rule over them in love; delight in his work, and way, and grieve for, and strive, and pray against all that is contrary to him. Of their sins they are ashamed—in their own righteousness they have no confidence. Of Jesus the bridegroom of the church, it is truly said, "The upright love thee." Capt. 1. 4.

The Father himself loveth you. John 16. 27.

The history of the life of sorrows and grief, and death of shame, curse and agony, which Jesus sustained for sinners, was it believed perfectly in the heart, is enough to fill the mind with the strongest affection, and inflame the soul with the most fervent love. But alas! all have reason to complain for want of greater love to Christ, and stronger faith in him. O unbelief, what an enemy to love! Our love keeps pace with our faith. As the one grows stronger, the other increaseth. But if faith grows weak, love declines. Yet no one poor sinner that believes the record of Jesus' love and salvation, as his only hope and confidence, but love, in some degree, is drawn out to Jesus; for "faith worketh by love." The soul in its first love, and for a season perhaps, sees and knows only the love of Christ, and thinks little of the "love of the Father." It may be he considers, that what the Saviour did and suffered for sinners, was to procure the love of the Father to them, and to appease the fury of his wrath against them. But this is not right; let no disciple think so. For, saith the Saviour, "the Father himself loves you." Yea he teacheth us the love of the Father, as the only source and spring of his coming in the flesh to save us—for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3. 16.

Hence it is plain, God the Father loves sinners—loves them so as is inexpressible—with the greatest affection; that he gave, "who? an angel? an archangel? myriads of the heavenly host? No, but one, infinitely more dear to him, his Son, his only begotten Son, his dearly beloved Son, who lay in his bosom from all eternity, that we might "believe on him, and live through him." So, the effect proves the cause; and it is plain the love of the Father towards his people is prior to the Son's coming into the world to save them, or to their belief on Jesus. For says our Lord, "No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him." John 6. 44. And because the Father "hath loved us with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness he draws to Jesus." "Behold, [O ye followers of the Lamb] what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us." 1 John 3. 1. Trace his love to the fountain-head. The Holy Spirit of truth teacheth, that "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, and hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, &c." Eph. 1. 3, 4, 5.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 2 Cor. 12. 2.

Visions, manifestations, raptures and ecstasies of soul, though even from God himself, (which there is ever good reason to suspect, unless they sink the soul in humility, and excite such love to Jesus as is founded in knowledge and productive of obedience) are not to be gloried in. St. Paul says, it is not expedient for ME to glory. I know the danger, I fear the evil of it, through the pride and treachery of my nature. It tends to exalt one above measure; and to make others think more highly of one than they ought to think. Therefore, on that account, glorying in these things is to be avoided, though the cause of truth may require it, when the glory of God only may be promoted by it; on these accounts it may be expedient to glory; yet it is not expedient for the christian to do it. So Paul declared, and yet he did glory; for necessity compelled him.

Behold, admire, and imitate the humility of this great apostle, "I knew a man in Christ, &c." When he speaks of himself as a poor sinner, under the most humbling, self-abased views, then it is I MYSELF. Rom. 7. But here, lest ostentation should appear, he endeavours to conceal himself under the character of another man. What a contrast is there between self-exalting principles and the grace of the gospel! How widely different is this from the notions many professors entertain? For if they can but give a tolerable account of some vision, revelation or manifestation, which they suppose was from God, they conclude they know their sins are forgiven, and all is well. Perhaps this might pass on them fourteen years ago, more or less. But what is their frame and temper now? what their pursuit and practice? If no signs of faith, hope, love and obedience, but while sunk into carnality and the love of the world, yet strong in confidence that their sins are forgiven, and bold in hope of the safety of their state; surely such are blinded to the hope of the gospel through conformity to Jesus. Satan transforms himself, from a minister of darkness, into an angel of light. Luther was wont to caution against the white devil, as well as the black one. St. John's advice is ever needful, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4. 1.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. John 6. 55.

This is a great mystery, but it is a comforting truth in the experience of Christ's members: as our Saviour saith, "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me." So it is the believer's privilege to feed by faith on him that is sent, even the flesh and blood of Jesus; the Man "like unto ourselves in all things, but (his flesh is pure and holy, his blood immaculate and untainted) without sin:" therefore healthful for the soul to feed upon, and by it to be nourished up to eternal life. For consider, soul, "Christ suffered in the flesh" all the fiery wrath and dreadful curses of God's pure and holy law, which we deserved, because transgressors. Christ, in his flesh, perfectly fulfilled all the demands of God's righteous law, and so wrought out a righteousness for those who have no righteousness of their own. "In the body of his flesh he hath reconciled those who were aliens and enemies to God; and in the body of his flesh, through death, he presents them unto God, holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight." Col. 1. 22. Surely then the flesh of Jesus "is meat indeed." The richest repast, the most delicious banquet for poor sinners.

Christ's "blood is drink indeed." Most precious in its nature, most reviving to the thirsty soul. O believer! the blood of this God-Man hath been shed for thy sins; it hath fully atoned divine justice for them; and those, "who were sometime afar off, are now made nigh to God by the blood of Jesus." Eph. 2. 13. "By his blood peace is made with God." Col. 1. 20. "And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." 1 John 1. 7. Thus is Christ's flesh and blood the life of the soul. Hear the triumphant song of the saints in glory, "Jesus hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. 1. 5. Their confession of victory over Satan the accuser of their souls is, "by the blood of the Lamb." What is their glory and triumph above, was the food of their souls while poor sinners here below. For in every age, believers did all "eat of the same spiritual meat, and drank of the same spiritual drink, the flesh and blood of Christ." 1 Cor. 10. 3.

This food strengthens man's heart. This drink makes him of a cheerful countenance. "He dwelleth in me," saith Christ, by a secret and mystical union; as saith the Psalmist, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all ages;" "and I in him," by sweet manifestation, knowledge and comfort, by faith. Inestimable blessing! glorious privilege, thus to receive, thus to feed upon Christ in the heart by faith! For, saith Christ, "He that eateth me, shall live by me; he hath eternal life." Such are Christ's sweet words and hearty-welcome to his church: Eat, O friends! drink, O beloved! "Eat thy bread with joy; and drink thy wine with a merry heart." Eccles. 9. 7.

These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the Son of God.

1 John 5. 13.

Little Benjamin was as dear to his father Jacob as his elder brethren. The child Samuel was as truly a priest of the Lord as old Eli. So the feeblest lamb in the flock of Jesus, though ever so weak in faith and knowledge, yet is equally dear to the Father as the strongest believer—loved with the same everlasting love—alike interested in the salvation of Jesus—and as certainly an heir of eternal life. Many weak children are ready to own this; but they doubt in their minds, and suspect in their hearts, not happily knowing, nor being comfortably assured of their own interest in the salvation of Jesus. There were such in the apostles days; therefore the Comforter inspires the beloved John to write to them. Though he condescends to their weakness of knowledge and comfort because of the small degree of their faith, yet he speaks with the strongest assurance and the boldest confidence of the truth of salvation by Jesus. That is most certain. Eternal life is by Jesus only; and is sure to every member of his. Do you believe on the name of the Son of God, Jesus, the only Saviour of lost sinners? This truth lies at the foundation of the gospel: when this is known and believed in the heart, that soul has the earnest of eternal life.

The Spirit of Jesus has bestowed the precious gift of faith. It matters not as to the safety of the soul, how weak soever it may be in knowledge, comfort, and love; nor how much it may feel the opposing workings of carnal nature, reason, and unbelief against it. Its sensible groanings and sorrowful complaints are evidences of the life of the soul, through the faith of Jesus. But is the poor soul always to abide in this weak, low, mourning state? No; that cannot be. Jesus will make his members comfortable as well as safe. The Spirit who begets faith in the heart by the word, strengthens it also by the same truth. Faith comes by hearing the word, and it is also increased thereby. Therefore is Jesus and eternal life revealed. The apostles wrote of this, and ministers preach of this, that weak faith may be strengthened, strong faith increased—that knowledge and assurance may be comfortably enjoyed—that believers may continue to believe, and persevere in believing on the Son of God; who is “the author and finisher of our faith.” Heb. 12. 2.

In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.
Isa. 45. 24.

To trust in our own righteousness, and to glory in our own strength, is natural to us all. But when a poor sinner "knows himself, even as he is known of the Lord," he thinks otherwise. When he becomes a follower of the Lamb, he learns the language of Canaan, and says, "I have no confidence in the flesh." I subscribe with my whole heart to this confession of faith, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." That the Lord Jehovah is a God of righteousness, and that he is almighty in strength, who will dare deny? But by faith we speak the most comfortable knowledge of covenant-grace: I, a poor sinner, who am without strength, destitute of righteousness in myself, have both strength and righteousness in Jehovah. What I am, a sinner by nature and practice, that Jesus became by imputation. What Jesus is in his nature, and by his life, **RIGHTEOUS**, that I am in him. In myself I have no might, no strength, but "in the Lord Jesus am I strong, strong in him, and in the power of his might."

This is the glorious grace, the joyful truth of the everlasting covenant. Such honour have all the saints of Jesus. His perfect righteousness their clothing; his almighty strength their protection. Who then shall condemn them? what power can prevail against them? O believer! rejoice in thy privilege. This is thy triumph against every accusation, "In Jesus I have righteousness." This is thy victory over every enemy, "In Jesus I have strength." Under the most discouraging views of thy nature, as corrupt and sinful—thy life and practice, as unrighteous—the condemnings of the law, though just—the accusations of Satan, though grievous—yet in thy glorious covenant head and representative, thou art "made the righteousness of God; in the Beloved Son of God thou art accepted." Under the most dejecting sense of thine own weakness, to withstand thy corruptions, to get the mastery over thy sinful passions, to prevail against thine enemies; though weak to perform any duty, insufficient to exercise any grace, to do the will of God, to walk in his ways, and to please him; yet ever, under all circumstances, the Spirit testifies of Jesus, "who is our strength and righteousness." All fulness is in Jesus; and "out of his fulness we receive grace for grace." Though "without Christ we can do nothing; yet, through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things." "Abide in me," saith the Lamb.

Poor helpless worms in thee possess Thou art our mighty all, and we
Grace, wisdom, power, and righteousness, Give our whole selves, O Lord, to thee.

By grace are ye saved, Eph. 2. 5.

O thou man of God, "let not this truth forsake thee, bind it about thy neck, write it upon the table of thine heart; it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." Prov. 3. 3, 8. In the faith of this thou wilt live in love and gratitude to God, in chearful obedience to his sovereign will, and in confident hope and earnest expectation of eternal glory. While thou wilt be daily dying to every carnal hope and legal confidence, by the atonement and righteousness of Jesus, this will be all thy plea, all thy hope, and all thy glorying. Hereby thou wilt be kept humble, and walk safely. That "the foot of pride prevail not against thee," is a happy part of this glorious salvation, so as to submit to it as intirely of grace, free favour, unconditional election, unmerited love, "according to the good pleasure of the will of God the Father." Eph. 1. 5. It is SOVEREIGN GRACE, therefore sure and saving to all the spiritual seed of Jesus. All in our nature is averse to it. Nothing in us could deserve a right to it, or procure a title in it. It is freely proclaimed to the wretched and hell-deserving, who have neither power nor inclination to perform any terms and conditions to obtain an interest in it. But the Lord's hand laid the foundation; his power will raise the superstructure; "He will bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings of grace, grace!" Zech. 4. 7.

Salvation is by DISTINGUISHING GRACE. "One shall be taken and another left." "One of a city and two of a family," Jer. 3. 14. whomsoever the Lord is pleased to take and separate to himself as vessels of honour. The effects of saving grace are distinguishing; it works effectually in them that believe: "They are called with an holy calling"—possess the faith of God's elect—they experience "repentance to salvation"—they differ from their former selves in hope and conduct—and are distinguished also from the world, "that lies in wickedness." Under its sovereign influence such a change was wrought in Paul, that he, "who persecuted Jesus and his members, preached the faith he once destroyed." Gal. 1. 23. So every subject of grace is changed in judgment and affection. He no longer thinks grace is to assist him to do something to gain acceptance with God; but he knows "God hath made us accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace." Eph. 1. 6. Hence his affections are placed upon the God of all grace, as his center of all happiness and source of all felicity. He delights "to run the way of God's commandments." It is his joy that Jesus flies upon the wings of the wind to his relief. He loves to fly on the wings of faith and love to him. He daily prays "to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Phil. 1. 11..

Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth: I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me. Jer. 15. 10.

It is sweet consolation to new-born souls to know the state they are come to. Verily, saith Paul, "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, and unto the heavenly Jerusalem." Heb. 12. 22. Even all the glorious privileges of Jesus' church and kingdom, of love, grace and peace. The utmost stretch of thought comes infinitely short of our highly-favoured state. See also the blessed company you are come to, "an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." ver. 23. And hath distinguishing grace thus honoured us? Shall the church our mother bring us forth? Shall it be so, and will not the world take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus? That cannot be, for then we should be bastards and not sons. For all are partakers of the world's hatred, as soon as they appear to be the objects of God's love, and live and act as his adopted children by grace.

What a strict harmony is there between the prophets and saints of the old-testament, and the apostles and disciples of Jesus under the new? What strong confirmation, that both are dictated by the same Spirit? In this one truth also they both perfectly agree, "We are not of the world, therefore the world hateth us." John 15. 19. But marvel not, saith our loving Jesus, it is not you, but me. I am the principal object of hatred, you only for my sake. But poor souls are ready to cry out, "Woe is me." What am I always to be thus in strife and contention? Is not my deportment and carriage towards the children of this world quiet and inoffensive? No; they cannot, they will not think so, unless you do as they do, live as they live, follow their vain customs, and partake with them of their carnal joys. "I have neither borrowed nor lent." Verily, this plea of excuse is the cause of offence. For this they will curse us as over-righteous precise fools. But stoop to borrow their ways, and lend yourself to their customs and practices, cast in your lot with them, and all will be well; peace and friendship will subsist. But no; we prefer spiritual fellowship with Jesus above all: we dare not forsake him, nor incur our Father's displeasure. We know "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." James 4. 4.

In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began. Tit. 1. 2.

Christ's sheep are the trophies of his victory, the triumphs of his cross, and the glory of his crown. Though naturally captives and slaves to the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, yet when rescued by sovereign grace, they hear the Shepherd's voice and follow him. But at present they are prisoners of hope. The soul is imprisoned and immured in the noisom walls of the flesh—exposed to many taunts and jeers of the enemy—and liable to many fresh rallies and onsets from the prince of darkness. Often through their views being darkened, and from the opposing lusts of the flesh they fear, and are in doubt whether they shall ever arrive to the glorious mansions of liberty and love; and the more they look to and consider themselves, the more discouragements arise. But if eternal truth and almighty power, founded in everlasting unchangeable love, can secure them and bring them to glory, they are surely safe—they shall be eternally happy.

This then is the joyful hope, such the glorious confidence of every poor sinner who hath fled to Jesus for refuge. Hope towards God, founded upon faithfulness and truth, and declared by promise, can never fail. O soul, before conversion thou wast a dead sinner, without hope. But hast thou faith, and hope, and love in thine heart? precious graces of the blessed Spirit! but not the foundation whereon to build thy confidence. Ere time existed; or days were numbered, or thou hadst a being, hope for thy soul dwelt in the heart of God—eternal life was planned by the glorious THREE—promised by the Father to Jesus the surety: He hath performed all the conditions of the covenant. By hearing the glad tidings, the divine Spirit begets faith in, love to them, and hope of enjoying them. Gifts and graces are given from the covenant of eternal life; they are evidences and pledges of interest in, but not procuring causes of eternal salvation. It behoves to be careful not to invert the order of gospel-grace; lest the mind should be perplexed, and satan gain an advantage; and there should be glorying in graces received, instead of the God of all grace and love. Ever trace the streams to the fountain-head. Frames and feelings often vary; they may delude and deceive—gifts may be lost—graces may decline. But Jesus, our object, cannot: “He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The God of truth cannot lie. His promise cannot fail. Eternal life is secure to all the heirs of promise. Wherefore are eternal transactions revealed? but for God's glory and the confirmation of his people's faith and hope in God, and to excite love to him. Ever remember, “By grace ye are saved.” Eph. 2. 5.

Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. 1 John 5. 1.

It is too common for many of God's dear children to perplex and distress their minds, in seeking after marks and evidences of the new-birth. And they too often expect to find them outwardly in the flesh, instead of looking inwardly to the spirit. For the satisfaction and comfort of the children, the Holy Ghost hath laid down this inward evidence FAITH as an incontestable mark of a new-born soul.

When Peter made that glorious confession, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Jesus replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon; flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." All the powers and abilities of human nature and reason (so far from teaching) are at enmity against this soul-saving truth. It is a knowledge only revealed by the Spirit, and received and believed in heaven-born souls—that the man Jesus is the only Saviour—that he is the anointed of God to the work of salvation of lost sinners. The very devils know and confess this, but without any hope of salvation thereby. But when any poor sinner is enabled to believe this in his heart, it is a blessed evidence of the love of the Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit. "He hath the witness in himself, that he is born of God." He hath the mark and evidence of a child of God within him. As the gift of Jesus is the fruit of God's everlasting love, so faith in Jesus is the fruit of his having "died for our sins, and risen again for our justification, and ascended to the Father, and sent the Holy Ghost to testify of him. It is called a holy faith; it dwells in holy hearts, and produceth holy fruits. Happy the heart that hath received this power and privilege to become a son of God. The love of the holy Trinity is upon such a soul. It is his privilege, like the happy Eunuch, "to go on his way rejoicing." It is his happiness to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

The sov'reign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace;
Born in the image of his Son,
A new peculiar race.

The Spirit, like some heav'nly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh,

New-models all the carnal mind,
And forms the man afresh.

Our quick'ned souls by faith arise
From the long sleep of death;
On heav'nly things we fix our eyes,
And praise employs our breath.

*Then said his wife unto him, dost thou still retain
thine integrity? Curse God and die. Job 2. 9.*

In seasons of distress and affliction how must it alleviate the mind, and soothe our sorrows, to have so near and dear a friend as the partner of our lives speak a good word in due season? But on the contrary, when such an one is used as an instrument by the adversary, it heightens distress, and adds a double weight to the pressure of afflictions. Such was the case of patient Job. Flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone taunts at him for his integrity, and urges that advice, which was as a dagger to his very heart. Verily, believer, thou also art "born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." And hast therefore need of the same faith and patience Job had; of which thou also art a partaker, though not to so eminent a degree. Thou also hast a peevish, fretful, repining partner for life; which will be ever urging upon thee reproaches, and giving thee such advice which is at the peril of thy soul to hearken to. Be then on thy guard against this dear partner, rather near enemy, even thy carnal sinful nature, the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Know assuredly, when it would reason with thee, it is to beguile thee—when it demands an audience, it is to instil the venom of poison. Its nature is enmity, its workings are rebellion; its reasonings treason against thy God. If thou give place to the flesh it will wound thy soul. If thou suffer it to gain an ascendancy it will darken thy mind, and bring distress upon thy conscience. "If thou livest after the flesh thou shalt die." If therefore at any time, through the pride and perverseness of the flesh, thou art tempted to entertain hard thoughts of thy God; to be impatient under his chastisements, and murmur against his allotments; to call in question the truths of his word—the stability of his covenant—the freeness of his promises—and the security of thy soul through the faith of Jesus; resist its suggestions in the faith by the word of grace; turn from its reasonings as from a bitter foe; and silence it with the humble submissive language of faith: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Thou seas and storms of deep distress
We sail by faith, and not by sight;
Christ guides us in the wilderness
Thro' all the briars of the night.

Dear Father, if thy lifted rod
Resolve to scourge us here below,
Still we must lean upon our God,
Thine arm shall bear us safely thro'.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Matt. 11. 25, 26.

The true ministers of Christ are greatly encouraged in their labours, knowing they serve the sovereign Lord, who hath declared, "My word shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please: it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." Isa. 55. 11. "To some the gospel is a favour of life unto life; unto others of death unto death." To some Jesus is revealed, to others the gospel is hid. Nevertheless, his ministers "are unto God, a sweet favour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." 2 Cor. 2. 15.

What shall we say to these things? shall we dare to cavil against the sovereign dispensations of God, or arraign him at the bar of our weak judgments? shall the potsherds of the earth contend with Jehovah and say, What dost thou? Shall the pride of our carnal reason, and the rebellion of our corrupt nature, vent itself with, 'I will not allow it at all;' I cannot believe it is just and righteous that the Lord should act with sovereignty, give or withhold his special grace as it seemeth good unto him? St. Paul sharply reproves such daring speeches, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" It is plain that thou walkest not humbly; thou hast not the mind of Christ: The Father's will was his joy; Jehovah's purposes his delight: and with his sovereign dispensations Jesus most cheerfully acquiesced; "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Herein he hath left us an example. This is beyond all other reasons we can assign for God's dealings in grace and providence. Such sentiments shew, that we have been taught of God, are little in our own eyes, passive as babes in our own judgment, and are submissive children to our Father's will.

As a spiritual revelation of the hope of the gospel, is by the sovereign grace of the Holy Spirit, "who divideth to every man severally as he will." So it ever begets humility of heart. Why me, Lord! creates amazement of soul. What am I! ever excites love and gratitude. Am I called to the faith of Jesus, and the hope of salvation, while others, of the wise and prudent of this world, are left in the darkness, pride and rebellion of their nature? O what shall I render unto the Lord? How fearful to offend, how studious to please, how joyful to glorify the Lord my God ought I to be from day to day? "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

Thus doth the Lord of heav'n and earth And orders all his works of grace
His great decrees fulfil, By his own sov'reign will,

And one told David, saying, Abithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Abithophel into foolishness. 2 Sam. 15. 31.

Clouds gathered very fast and grew very black at this time over the head of king David. His own beloved son had drawn the sword of rebellion—his subjects flocked in great numbers—and to heighten the king's distress his own counsellor joined the conspiracy. But under all this David shewed himself to be a man after God's own heart. His soul looks through every discouragement. He knew the throne of grace to be ever open and accessible, therefore the tidings that brought sorrow to his heart he instantly makes the subject of his prayer. Happy conduct! when before carnal reason is suffered to plead, the prayer of faith is presented. Too, too oft do disciples, upon hearing disagreeable tidings, consult flesh and blood before they apply to their ever-loving and faithful friend Jehovah. This ought not so to be. According to David's faith and prayer so the Lord answered him. The counsel which he had reason to dread from Abithophel, was defeated by the Lord, and turned to his own destruction. Thus "the Lord only is our refuge and strength; a very present help in every time of trouble." Psalm 46. 1.

Knowest thou not, disciple, there is treason and rebellion found with thee against David's Lord, even Jesus, the king of saints? Not greater reason had David to fear, and to pray against Abithophel's counsel, than thou hast daily. As his name signifies [brother of ruin or folly] it reminds one of the flesh, a brother or partaker of the ruin of sin with the soul; and also that its wisdom is ever with us, and is ever counselling and conspiring against the peace and safety, the love and holiness, the joy and happiness of the soul in Christ Jesus. It not only counsels against but lusts contrary to the Spirit continually. May this be our daily prayer in the spirit and in faith, "O Lord, turn the counsel of the flesh into foolishness, confound its pride, destroy its lusts, subdue its passions; let us not confer with flesh and blood, let us not sow to the flesh, but enable us to confer with thee by faith; may our conversation be in heaven. So strengthen us to put off the old man with his deeds."

Arise, my soul, my joyful pow'rs,
And triumph in my God;
Awake, my voice, and loud proclaim
His glorious grace abroad.

Christ rais'd me from the deeps of sin,
The gates of gaping hell,
And fixt my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell.

Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.
 Luke 17. 4.

The least degree of malice, hatred or revenge is contrary to the genius of the gospel—inconsistent with the character of a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus. But our Master knows what is in man, and that his members are composed of flesh, as well as spirit; and therefore liable to offend one against another, and thereby hurt and injure each other in the peace of their minds, and fellowship of their spirits. As also hereby to cause the way of truth to be evil of spoken by the adversaries, who are glad to take up every advantage to cry out, “O these are your saints! see how full of wrath they are; how they bite and devour each other!” therefore, “Take heed to yourselves,” saith Jesus. Watch against this evil. Offences will come. I teach you how to behave: Suppose your brother trespass against thee, pity his weakness; pray for him by name to thy Father and his Father: Beware of angry resentment. If he aggravates his offence by frequent repetition, thou shalt in no wise hate thy brother; but as oft as he offendeth, if he as often “turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” But are we not to forgive him until and unless he do turn and say, I repent? In one sense we ought, in another sense perhaps not. We must not at our peril entertain anger, or let the sun go down on our wrath; but in our hearts freely and fully forgive an offending brother. But if he remain stubborn, and persists in a spirit of contention and bitterness, even then we are to forgive him in our hearts, and be desirous of embracing him in the arms of love.

But may we not justly suspend declaring our forgiveness to him until he turn and say I repent? Herein we have not God's word and God's method as our example. Though God loves his people in Christ Jesus, and for his sake pardons their sins; yet until they turn to him and repent he doth not manifest his pardon and forgiveness to them. But let us ever remember, as God's thoughts of love are towards us before we turn to him, so our thoughts of love should be to our offending brethren ere they turn to us. And doth the Lord Jesus require us to forgive every repeated offence, even until seventy times seven? surely then he will magnify his love, his mercy, in pardoning the innumerable offences of all who turn to him.

Great is God's love, and large his grace,
 Thy' the redemption of his Son:

He turns our feet from sinful ways,
 And pardons what our hands have done.

And I said, This is my infirmity. Psalm 77. 10.

While we are in the body, we are in an imperfect state; liable to various exercises of mind, through indwelling corruptions and the suggestions of satan. Saints in all ages have experienced fluctuating frames. Like the mariner, on a tempestuous sea, at one time they seem to mount up to heaven in comfort and joy; at another, they sink down in apprehension to the depths of hell; and, like persons at their wit's end, they express themselves in a very unreasonable manner. Doubt and uncertainty take place of knowledge and truth. Unbelief seems to prevail over faith; and they are ready to call all in question; not only past sweet experiences of God's love to their souls, but the very existence of God's promises, faithfulness and truth: and they write with the pen of inspiration, not of the Spirit of truth, but of a lying spirit, many false and bitter things against themselves. "Woe is me, I am undone," saith Isaiah. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," saith David. And in this psalm, hope seems as it were giving up the ghost, and with languid faint accents breathes, "will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" What a gloomy prospect! what soul-distressing views must a poor sinner have, who lives upon his frames; whose hope springs from his own faithfulness or trusts to the exercise of his own grace, instead of the God of all grace the blessed Jesus, "who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" How comforting! how heart-reviving to know the Lord "who sent redemption unto his people, will ever be mindful of his covenant, which standeth fast for ever?" Psalm 111. 5, 7. Therefore the Holy Spirit stands engaged, in covenant-contract, to execute his office as the comforter. When he is pleased to revive the soul with the views of Jesus, his glorious work, his finished salvation, satan skulks away like a mean abashed liar. The believer returns to his right mind, takes shame unto himself, and says, That I should ever doubt of thy love, call in question thy truth, suspect thy faithfulness: O my Jesus, this is my infirmity!

Hence from my soul sad thoughts begone,
And leave me to my joys;
My tongue shall triumph in my God;
Christ pleads his righteous cause.

Darkness and doubt had veil'd my mind,
And drown'd my eyes in tears,

Till sov'reign grace with shining rays
Dispell'd my gloomy fears.

In vain the tempter frights my soul,
And breaks my peace again;

One glimpse, dear Saviour, of thy face
Revives my joys again.

Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick. John 11. 3.

To have Jesus continually live in our thoughts, should be our daily study. To keep a sweet intercourse open between Christ and the soul, should be our constant exercise. And to be watchful against every bold intruder that would interrupt our communion with the Saviour, is our greatest wisdom. Thus, through the Spirit's aid, a holy freedom and humble familiarity is maintained with Christ and our hearts. Why should we not be aiming thus to anticipate heaven? For Jesus never intermits in his love to us, care over us, and presence with us. Through such a happy conduct we shall enjoy an abiding sense of this. Then, when sin assaults, afflictions surround us, sickness overtakes us, sorrow bows us down, death threatens, or whatever may be our state, how comforting when the twin sisters of faith and hope, like the two sisters of Lazarus, carry our case to the Master? "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Short but very expressive. Not like the Nobleman's importunate prayer: "Sir, come down, ere my son die;" but a simple message. They knew the love and power of Jesus. They doubted not his speed. It is enough to lay our case before the Lord. It is best intirely to submit to his will, and patiently wait his time. "He that believeth shall not make haste." *I sai. 28. 16.*

Is there a poor sinner on earth, who believes in Jesus, that can doubt of his love? Hath he not given the strongest assurances of it? Infinitely stronger than if he had sent an angel to testify of his love to us. For he came himself—he more than told us how he loved us—his sorrows, his sufferings, his agonies and death, most loudly proclaim it—for our sins he bled, for our sins he suffered; yea for that most base sin, that sin of all sins the greatest, unbelief. This, even this Jesus bore himself in his own body on the tree. Art thou often sick, and fearest this master sin will prove the death of thy soul, as it does now the life of thy comforts? Is this the grief of thine heart, and the cause of thy woe? Jesus is the alone physician, the only cure. Though, like the sisters of Lazarus, we cannot plead our strong love to Jesus, yet we may feel his love to us. "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Heal thy servant. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

How many are the thoughts of love?

Thy mercies, Lord, how great:

We have not words, nor hours enough,

Their numbers to repeat.

When I'm afflicted, poor and low,

And light and peace depart,

My Jesus sees my heavy woe,

And bears me on his heart.

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even thy holy temple. Psalm 65. 4.

When Christiana's heart was so enamoured by the affecting sight of the cross of Jesus by faith, she was wishing for all her carnal friends to partake with her in what she saw and felt. But she was reminded, that faith's views are of special grace. Pilgrim's Progress, part 2. They are the streams which flow from the river of God's electing love. Every man whom the Lord chooseth, "is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Ephesi 1. 3. 4. This is evidenced by the spiritual life of the soul. Hence its approaches to God. Seeing all grace, love, and happiness center in Jehovah, it delights to draw nigh to him, because of that confidence of access, by the new and living way consecrated through the flesh of Jesus. Here is no fiery law, no flaming sword, to terrify and affright the believer, in his drawing nigh to God. But the Lord himself causes him to approach his presence. Love not only invites, but sweetly constrains him to come as a child to its loving parent. "The Father draws to the Son, and the Son reveals the Father," by the power of the Holy Spirit, as a God of love to poor sinners: without this no soul can nor will come unto God, John 6. 44. See thy special mercy. Adore that sovereign grace that reigns over all the pride and stubbornness of thy will. And do I thus approach the Lord? O what infinite treasures of grace are secured by covenant love and promise! Not only a sudden transient fit of pleasure and delight in the ways of God do such experience; but they shall "dwell," their residence shall be near the Lord in spirit, and they shall be satisfied from Jesus. All the glory and magnificence of the temple was only typical of Jesus, who exceeds in glory. All the glory and goodness of the Lord is treasured up in Jesus. All fulness dwells in him. The Lord hath proclaimed all goodness in him, displayed through him, and communicated from him, as Mediator, to poor sinners.

O the super-abounding goodness of the Lord, to cause poor headstrong high-minded rebels to approach unto him, to draw near to him, and be satisfied with him! Most joyful claim of faith, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." Lam. 3. 24. A glimpse of Jesus' glory and goodness sickens the soul to every other object. A lively faith in him, and hope on him, engages the affections toward him; and love is very jealous and excites to watchfulness against any rival that may disturb its happiness or destroy its comfort. "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." Psalm 13. 6.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 2 Pet. 3. 14.

It is a grand delusion to imagine, that the doctrines of grace tend to lull the soul asleep in supine indolence, or slothful stupidity. The believer hath not so learned Christ. Though he is saved by grace freely, yet he is called to "labour diligently." By faith he looks forward to the fulfilment of awful predictions and precious promises. Hence we are excited to daily diligence in the performance of duties, in the use of means, and the exercise of graces. Do we look for the burning of the earth, the elements, and all sublunary things? do we expect to be the inhabitants of new heavens and a new earth? do we wait, and sometimes long for the coming of the Lamb, our loving master and precious Saviour? and shall we indulge carnal ease and spiritual sloth? Shall we not fear to be found of Jesus in such a state? Most true, "Jesus hath made peace for us by the blood of his cross." But shall we not be diligent to maintain a lively sense of this sweet peace in our hearts? And how is this to be expected, but by studiously avoiding those things which tend to draw the heart and alienate the affections from Jesus? If we lose sight of the Lamb, we lose the sense of peace. If we look at the things which are seen, they tend to beget love to them, and increase anxious solicitude for them. And, alas! then they only pierce us through with many sorrows. And most of all, when we are in our right minds, do our sorrows increase, if we decrease in spiritual diligence, and grow in worldly-mindedness?

Christian, though thou knowest it is God that giveth thee power to get wealth, and his providence is engaged to preserve thy body; yet thou abatest nothing of thy diligence in thy worldly concerns, nor art less careful to aim to keep thy body from harms, and administer to it such things as are for its health. Most happy is it for thee, thus daily to watch over and care for the peace and prosperity of thy soul. Jesus is thy peace, by living on him peace is enjoyed. He is thy Saviour; by looking to him thou shalt be kept free from filthy spots: and in this way, verily thou shalt be blameless; and be assured, "the diligent soul shall be made fat." Prov. 13. 4.

~~My thoughts are pant~~ these lower skies;
~~I look within the veil;~~
~~There springs of endless pleasure rise,~~
~~The water never fail.~~

There I behold with sweet delight
 The blessed Three in One,
 And strong affections fix my sight
 On God's incarnate Son.

And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. Matt. 14. 12.

Thus was extinguished that burning and shining light John Baptist. It is very staggering to the eye of sense, and the judgment of carnal reason, that the "Lord, whose eyes are over the righteous," should yet suffer his faithful ministers and dearest children to fall a sacrifice to the rage and malice of cruel and unreasonable men. This puzzled the royal prophet David—this also was an exercise to patient Job—and it has put disciples to the stand in all ages. One is ready to cry out, "Where is the God of Elijah? When it comes nearer home, and ourselves are the subjects of insults and injuries from the power and malice of enemies to Jesus and his truths; this is a trial of faith. And if the exercise is continued for a season, when the enemy triumphs, and God our friend appears not as our deliverer, how does our adversary satan, who has stirred up fightings without, industriously aim to inject fears within, with a "where is now thy God?" "What, dost thou vainly imagine thyself a child of God, while thy Father leaves thee to this cruel treatment? If thou wast in his favour, thou wouldest surely find his protection. Thy want of his care, proves thou hast no part in his love."

Now thou art called, O christian, to fight and resist satan steadfastly in the faith. Judge not of thy Father's love by present dispensations—strengthen thyself in thy God—consult his word—wait on him—take up the deceitful unclean body of sense and carnal reasoning, and bury it, and go and tell thy Jesus. He is thy wisdom, thy counsellor; he is a perfect match for thy subtle adversary. There is somewhat very alleviating to a distressed mind, to pour out its complaints into the sympathizing breast of a faithful friend. What is the cause of thy sorrows? make that the subject of thy free converse with the Saviour. If thou art smitten on earth, tell him who feels for thee in heaven. Here is thy comfort, he always hears, he ever loves, and he can instantly deliver. But if he does not, rest assured it is love delays for thy profit; but thou shalt be sure to find, "as tribulation abounds, consolation shall much more abound." And thy Lord's advice is, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm 50. 15.

Lord, we adore thy vast designs,
Th' obscure abyss of providence,
Too deep to sound with mortal line,
Too dark to view with feeble sense.

Now thou array'st thine awful face,
In angry frowns without a smile:
We, thro' thy clouds believe thy grace,
Secure of thy compassion still.

Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Dan. 6. 5.

Happy Daniel, to have such a testimony of thy conduct from the mouth of thine implacable enemies. Though these men could alledge nothing against this servant of the most high God, in regard to his outward life and conversation, for he was a good subject, a quiet neighbour, just and honest in his dealings. Though in an eminent station in the province, yet with what contempt and scorn do they speak of him? This Daniel, this over-righteous fellow, who pretends to be more religious than all the rest of his neighbours. As it was in the beginning, so it is now, and ever will be, "He that is born after the flesh, will persecute him that is born after the Spirit." Gal. 4. 29.

But let every disciple see to it, that he suffers as a christian. Take heed that thy life and conduct be such as becometh the gospel. It is a great blessing so to behave, that the carnal world can find no just occasion against one's moral conduct. This they are judges of. Their eyes are upon us, watching over us for evil. This ought to be improved, to make us very circumspect in our walk. As to our religion, this they abhor. For this every follower of the Lamb is sure to be hated for his Master's sake. "Wo be unto us when all men speak well of us," saith our Master, Luke 6. 26.

They seek matter enough against us; both as to faith, hope and life. And some would as surely cast us into a den of lions, as they did Daniel, was it practicable and permitted. But they could not deprive Daniel of the love, presence and protection of Jesus the Son of God: That makes every place a heaven of delight and joy. And when hated of all men for his sake, he hath pronounced us blessed, and hath bid us rejoice, and hath left us an example patiently to follow his steps.

Christ's dying prayer for the elect Jews, his murderers, was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Ignorance of the truth, is the cause of hatred and malice against the servants of Jesus. Hast not thou a heart to pity and a tongue to pray for the enemies of thy soul? Here thou mayest indulge a sweet revenge. These weapons thou mayest always use. And how knowest thou but the most furious persecutor, like Paul, may be a chosen vessel, dearly beloved of God the Father, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus—and ere to-morrow's sun, the grace of the Holy Spirit may bring him as an humble penitent to the feet of Jesus? "who maketh thee to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. 4. 7.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Heb. 9. 24.

How highly was Zacharias honoured, to hear the gospel of salvation from the mouth of an angel! who said, "I am Gabriel, that stands in the presence of God, and am sent unto thee, to shew thee these glad tidings." But we see the awful effects of unbelief; though thus beloved and honoured of God, yet he was struck dumb for a season. Though God most dearly loves his people in Christ Jesus, yet he sees their sins, and with fatherly affection will chastise for them. Do we not see somewhat of our own case here? For as faith in Jesus inspires the heart and tongue with boldness, so unbelief strikes us dumb. We cannot speak a word, nor offer a plea for our poor souls, if we lose sight of Jesus. But he never forgets us, nor are our souls ever neglected by the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne. In our nature, in the same human body which was hanged on the tree, with the five wounds in his pierced hands and feet and in his precious side, he appears in the presence of God; like some victorious conqueror, who has gloriously delivered his country from the cruelty and rage of a merciless enemy, he glories in the scars he received in the field of battle.

When Jesus wept over dead Lazarus, see how he loved him, said the Jews. But when poor sinners think of his wounds, crucifixion, agonies and death, O what infinitely greater reason is there to say, See how he loved us! see how he still loves us. Notwithstanding all our base and unloving behaviour to him, still, O most soul-affecting truth! still he appears before God FOR US—he presents his once mangled body—he pleads his once bleeding wounds in our behalf as our atoning sacrifice for our sins, for our salvation. Thus glorified Jesus now appears in the presence of God for us, as our dear Mediator, our loving Lord and precious Saviour, our affectionate Advocate and powerful Intercessor. When sin presents itself to the mind, and sorrow bows us down, how happy are our souls in knowing that Jesus is before the throne for us, and is, through the favour of the Holy Spirit, also present to our minds! then we truly love and rejoice in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor. 13. 14.

Lift up your eyes to th' heav'nly seat,
Where our Redeemer stays;
Kind intercessor, there he sits,
And loves, and pleads, and prays.

Petitions now, and praise may rise,
And saints their off'rings bring;
The priest with his own sacrifice
Presents them to the King.

And for shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt. i. 21.

The Holy Ghost brings much consolation to the hearts of poor sinners, from the belief of the manhood of Jesus. To this end the Comforter is so particular in his testimony, by the word of the conception and birth of Christ. This is our happiness at all times to consider the Saviour as "Emanuel God with us," our Brother, "flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone."

As Elihu says of himself, "Behold, I am, according to thy wish, in God's stead. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee." Job 33. 5, 6. So to conceive of Jesus, is a sweet mystery joyfully known to the believing heart. And his name is as "precious ointment poured forth." For it diffuseth the sweet savour of the Father's everlasting love issuing in eternal salvation. Therefore he is called Jesus, for he shall save even ALL his people, of every kindred, nation, tribe and tongue; even all that are his, "by the gift of the Father." John 17. 9. Save them from their sins, from the curse of the law denounced against sinners. Their sins are imputed to him by his life of obedience to the law: They are righteous by his righteousness imputed to them—from the guilt of all sin, by his death and atoning blood—from the love and power of sin in their hearts, by the grace of his Spirit, regenerating and renewing them in the spirit of their minds.

This, believer, thou hast in Jesus by faith, but much more in hope: For our Jesus will deliver from the very being of sin. That enemy whom thou seekest to-day, thou shalt shortly see no more for ever. This thou longest for. This glorious state thou shalt enjoy; for thou shalt "receive the end of thy faith, even the salvation of thy soul." Though thou art a poor sinner, yet through the grace of our Lord Jesus thou art rich—thou art "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Hence grace and glory are secured to thee. It is thy mercy that salvation is his work, and he hath finished it. It is thy comfort to believe this daily. It is thy duty to give Jesus all the glory. The more light thou receivest from the word of Jesus and the Spirit of truth, so much the more wilt thou see of thine own vile sinful nature and abhor thyself, and glory only in the infinite perfection of the salvation of Jesus.

'Twas God's own purpose that began
To rescue rebels doom'd to die;
He gave us grace in Christ his Son,
Before he spread the starry skies.

Jesus the Lord appears at last,
And makes his Father's counsels known;
Declares the great transactions past,
And brings immortal blessings down.

It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Phil. 2. 13.

It is the peculiar blessing of every new creature in Christ Jesus, to be "renewed in knowledge." And as the soul advances in the divine life, he more clearly understands the heights and depths of the mysteries of divine grace, by the Word and Spirit of truth: So also the workings of the mystery of iniquity.

The notions of our own free-will and self-righteousness are the weeds of nature, they spring from pride, which is interwoven with our very constitution and being. This opposes and rebels against our own mercies, even the free-grace truths of the gospel. But it is the exercise of faith to submit to the righteousness of God, to bow to the sovereignty of his will, and to adore his Spirit who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. O disciple of Jesus, how art thou sweetly constrained to own this from the rich experience of the truth upon thy own soul? What is the natural bent of thy free-will, but to reject Jesus the Lord of life and glory? Its language is, "I will not have this man to reign over me." I have other and better lovers, and after them I will go. I will enjoy the pleasures of sin. I will love the world: I will take my full swing in the gay delights, the pleasing profits, and glorious honors of it. Thus the natural free-will of man speaks plain, by its affections and actions, through the darkness of the understanding. Thy free-will was to destroy thyself: It was the will of the Lord to save thee in Christ Jesus. Therefore in the day of power, the Holy Spirit made thee willing to come to Jesus for life and salvation. With free choice, and cheerful willingness, thou camest in faith, as a perishing sinner to a precious Saviour. Wilt thou ever ascribe any glory to thy will? Wilt thou ever suffer thy power to share in the trophies of thy Lord? Nay, shall not free, sovereign, unmerited grace, have all the glory? While the daily prayer of thy soul will be, Leave me not, O Lord, to myself; for without thee, O Jesu, I can do nothing—nothing but sin against thee, and wound my own soul. If thou truly delightest in the law of God after the inward man, if it is the delight of thy soul "to do those things which are pleasing in his sight," ever put this soul-humbling, grace-exalting question to thy heart, "Who made me to differ? What have I that I have not received?" Therefore I have nothing whereof to glory.

Lord, what is man, or all his race,
Who dwells so far below,

That thou shouldst visit him with grace,
And love his nature so

Jesus our Lord, how wondrous great,
Is thine exalted name!

The glories of thy heav'nly state
Let the whole earth proclaim.

We that are in this tabernacle do grone, being burdened. 2 Cor. 5. 4.

It is a sore temptation, that saints of God in all ages have fallen under, that they, upon a survey of the outward ease, pleasure and prosperity of the ungodly, "have called the proud happy;" Mal. 3. 15. and under a sense of their inward groanings, burdens and sorrows, they have been led to think, it is vain to serve God, and call in question his love to them, and care for them. Such sentiments as these, at times exercise their minds: "I called by grace! Is my soul quickened and made alive to God? have I fled to Jesus for refuge? am I a child of God by adoption, through the faith of Jesus? Surely it cannot be. Was it so, should I be thus plagued all the day, and chastened every morning? should I grone thus under oppression from Satan, tribulation from the world; and especially be thus burdened with the lusts of the flesh, and the carnal workings of corrupt nature? Surely if ever I have known any thing of Jesus in spirit and power, it is all come to an end: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency to no purpose."

Thus doth the subtle serpent artfully steal into the mind, and often borrows the tongue of saints. But this is very injurious to the soul, as we see in the experience of the Psalmist, 73d Psalm. And it is highly resented by our loving Lord and Saviour, as very dishonourable to him, as we see in Mal. 3. 14.

Saints burdens are creature-allotments—believers groanings are Jesus' concerns—Children's sorrows reach the Father's heart—they are the lot of God's people in every age. Prophets, apostles, martyrs and confessors of Jesus, none exempt while in this tabernacle. Yea they are the evidences of the life of the soul: and also, under the Spirit's influence, work for the profit of the soul. Hereby it is instructed in self-knowledge to bow to the sovereignty of God in humility and dependence on Jesus. Prayer is excited—faith is called into exercise—God's word is searched—promises are prized—exhortations become pleasant—carnal hopes are cut off—worldly joys become irksome—earth is less loved—and a sinful body groined under, makes perfect freedom in glory longed for. But here is a sweet portion of comfort; drink of the brook by the way, and lift up thy head; "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Psalm 55. 22.

Now let my Lord my Saviour smile,
And shew his name upon my heart;
I would forget my pains awhile,
And in the pleasure lose the smart.

O why, my soul, why these complaints?
Still while he frowns his bowels move;
Still on his heart he bears his pains,
And feels their sorrows and his love.

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 1 Pet. 3. 4.

Godly parents are delighted at their very hearts, if they see their dear children partakers of the grace of God. How joyful to hear those, who are part of ones-self, inquire after Jesus and salvation! Love and duty unite to constrain us to teach our little-ones the knowledge of Jesus; to instruct them in the ways of the Lord. And if the Spirit of grace is pleased to crown such endeavours with success, infinitely more precious is the adorning of grace to their souls, than all the gaiety of dress to their perishing bodies.

As we to ours, so doth the Lord rejoice over all his dear children in Christ Jesus. He takes pleasure in their dress, which is the robe of his Son's righteousness: and their ornaments are delighting to his eyes. "He makes them all glorious within:" he loves his own image, which he hath formed by his Spirit, "in the hidden man of the heart." Both the inward graces and the outward fruits are an ornament to them; and are "of great price in the sight of their heavenly Father." By inward fellowship, with our God and Saviour, we are more and more "conformed to his likeness;" for a meek and quiet spirit ever accompanies love. Where the former is wanting, the declinings of the latter are evident. As faith works by love, so love shews itself by meekness of spirit and quietness of behaviour. There is a sweet harmony in the graces of the Spirit. By faith the soul abides in Jesus, and receiveth out of his fulness. By love the heart is comforted. And as Peter and John said to the beggar, "What we have received of the Lord, that we give unto you." So the christian dispenses out of his heart, love to his brethren and to mankind. Love controls the boisterous passions of nature. Love constrains to meekness of temper and quietness of spirit. We sadly mistake, and are greatly deceived by our corrupt nature and carnal reason, and the subtilty of satan, when we act with any other spirit, and attempt to find an excuse for it. Nay, but it is unbecoming thy character—a disgrace to thy profession—a dishonour to our Saviour—it grieves the Spirit; is a badge of satan's livery—a fruit of the flesh, and is contrary to the Spirit. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, the peace of men, nor the comfort of the soul.

Bless'd are the meek, who stand afar
From rage and passion, noise and war;
God will secure their happy state,
And plead their cause against the great.

Bless'd are the men of peaceful life,
Who quench the coals of growing strife;
They shall be call'd the heirs of bliss,
The sons of God, the God of peace.

For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: Because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. 1 Sam. 12. 22.

The prophet Samuel, like the apostle Paul, "shunned not to declare all the counsel of God." Acts 20. 27. They feared not licentious consequences from preaching the faith-establishing, soul-comforting truth of God's unchangeable love to his people. Yet Samuel encourages the people to cleave close unto the Lord, and not turn aside from following him; assuring them, if they walked contrary to the Lord, though God would never change in his love, or cast off his people, "whom he did fore-know," yet he would change in his conduct and dispensations towards them. "He would surely visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, his loving-kindness he will not utterly take away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." Psalm 89. 32, 33. Like a tender and affectionate parent to a disobedient child, his love is the same, when he corrects, as when he dandles on the knee. It is of the Lord's good pleasure only, that he chooses a people for his glory. He calls them to himself by sovereign grace: and the honour of his name, and the perfection of his attributes, are engaged for their safety and salvation.

The faith of a christian, how firm its foundation! It builds on the rock of ages, the eternal truth of an unchanging God of love. His "hope is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, which is entered within the vail, whither the Forerunner for us is entered, even Jesus." Heb. 6. 19, 20. How then should our love be inflamed, and burn with incessant ardour to our ever-loving Lord and Saviour? Hath it pleased the Lord to put me among his children, to make me one of his people? It was free unmerited love. Hath the blessed Spirit enriched my heart with faith in the precious Jesus? hath he, in his word, over and over assured us, "That he will never leave nor forsake, but whom he loves he loves to the end?" Why is all this? Even because it pleased the Lord; "so it seemed good in his sight." And have I sinned? Heart-wounding thought! sinned against his love? am I back-slidden in affection? grown cold and indifferent to the kindest and best of beings? Shameful ingratitude! Is the love of God in Christ Jesus, the source of all present grace, the security of future glory? Verily it should sink poor sinners to the lowest humility; affect with the deepest self-abasement and sorrow for sin; yet excite godly hope and rejoicing in Christ Jesus; and influence to the most chearful diligence of serving a God of love, "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.
1 Kings 14. 13.

Such was the testimony, which the Lord gave by his prophet of young Abijah, the son of the wicked Jeroboam. The father was branded, even to a proverb, for his abominable wickedness. Behold the son is recorded by the Lord for his goodness; singled out from the whole house of his father, to be blessed of his God, and to come to his grave in peace.

Children of grace often spring from the loins of ungodly parents. The offspring of godly parents, often appear graceless. Grace is not hereditary, but is the sovereign gift of God. Parents may and ought to give good instructions, but God only makes them successful. Some good thing would not have been found in young Abijah, if the Lord had not put it there. It was of the will of the Lord, or because the Lord was his father, as his name Abijah signifies. God's covenanted children, though by nature children of wrath, and though in their "flesh dwells no good thing;" yet, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, "they are created anew in Christ Jesus, in righteousness and true holiness, unto good works:" and after the inward man, "they delight in the law of God." Some good thing is found in them, which manifests itself in love, fear and obedience to the Lord their God. The graces of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and the fruits of the Spirit in their lives, are evidences in time of God's covenant love to them in Christ Jesus before time. God views the work of his new creation in the soul with delight; pronounces it good, and to his own glory records the graces of his people. What comes from God leads to him.

Thus we see "some good thing" found in the heart of Abijah, manifesting itself in the wicked house of Jeroboam, to the glory of Jehovah the God of Israel. O how highly honoured are some who are converted to God's glory and service in the morning of youth! while the sun of righteousness doth not arise upon others, till the sun of nature is near setting. Hath distinguishing grace made us to differ, as well from our former selves, as from others? It is all from the love of the Father through Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. We have nothing whereof to glory in ourselves, nor over others; it is our duty to confess it with our lips, and manifest it in our lives. May it encourage us daily to walk in faith and love. "The just shall live by faith." Heb. 10. 38.

Let no man beguile you of your reward. Col. 2. 18.

Since an artful and subtle serpent hath gained access to the human heart, we can never be warned too much to beware of men. Satan deceived man at the beginning, by means of part of himself. He still beguiles men by man. Though the adversary cannot pluck one of Christ's sheep out of his hands, nor rob the loving Saviour of one of the precious jewels of his mediatorial crown, still we are to consider him as a restless implacable foe, who will strive by all means to perplex and distress our souls. Has Jehovah Jesus appeared to us in the vision of faith? hath he spoke to our trembling hearts, in his word and by his Spirit, as he did to the father of the faithful? "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. 15. 1. Like the racers in the Olympic games, we must expect false judges, corrupted umpires who will judge against us; determine the prize contrary to our faith and hope in free-grace promises and sovereign determinations.

They will judge against the truth and glory of our prize, as though we were not complete in Christ Jesus—as though we were not wise by his wisdom—righteous by his righteousness—holy by his holiness—perfectly redeemed from all sin, curse and wrath, by his complete redemption—but that somewhat is to be found and trusted to, in nature and self, to intitle us to God's grace, and secure to us a crown of glory. Blessed admonition! Let no man beguile you, judge against you, ye free-born, heaven-born souls, concerning the perfect freeness, and infinite fulness of your prize, your reward, Jesus: for by this they would weaken your faith, disturb your peace, and oppose your comfort. So they would beguile you to run uncertainly; as though your hopes were suspended on your own faithfulness in fulfilling terms and conditions, whereby to secure the prize. Ever reject such mercenary, base, compounding notions with detestation, as contrary to covenant-love and gospel-grace—dishonouring to our precious Saviour, and grieving to the holy sovereign Spirit, who bears witness, that "there is a remnant according to the election of grace;" that the prize is adjudged to them "by grace, not of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work." Rom. 11. 5, 6.

Firm as the earth thy gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust;
If I am found in Jesus' hands,
My soul can ne'er be lost.

His honour is engag'd to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heav'nly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.

Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour. Isa. 45. 15. X

Mourning under a sense of sin, and complaining of inbred corruptions, are consistent with faith in Jesus, and rejoicing in his salvation. Sorrowing under the painful sense of an absent God, has been the experience of saints in all ages; few, if any, have been exempt from it. And this is an evidence that they have felt his comforting presence, enjoyed the smiles of his love, and rejoiced in the light of his countenance. So the life of the soul is manifested.

But why should a God of love hide himself from his dear children? We may say, he is a sovereign, and answer in the words of Elihu, Job 33. 13. "He giveth not account of any of his matters." But it is most sweet to say with David, "Continually let the Lord be magnified, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants." Psalm 35. 27. Therefore when God hides himself from the souls of his believing children, it is in love, wisdom, and faithfulness to them: It is to advance his own glory, and to further the prosperity of their souls. But he never leaves himself without a witness in their hearts: For we see the church addresses him though she sees him not—sweetly applies to him as Jesus the only SAVIOUR, and utters her complaint before him, "Thou hidest thyself," and I am troubled. So the withdrawing of the comforting warmth of the sun makes vegetable nature droop and languish, and it mourns in silent sadness. But the root is still alive, and it will, when the sun returns, bring forth its fruit in due season. Backward springs often produce the most plentiful harvest. So the Lord teaches his sovereignty, roots the soul in humility, prevents the growth of spiritual pride, reproves for a careless walk, chides for worldly-mindedness, causes great searchings of heart, embitters sin, excites to holy mourning, calls forth earnest longings, restless seekings, and fervent prayings. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" will be the restless inquiry of a loving deserted heart. I cannot live without him: His presence is heaven; his absence is hell. Soul, ever beware of lending thine ear for a moment to any base suggestion, contrary to this sweet declaration of an unchanging God of truth and love: "In a LITTLE wrath I hid my face from thee for a MOMENT, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Isa. 54. 8.

How boundless is our Father's grace,
In height and depth and length:

He made his Son our righteousness,
His Spirit is our strength.

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God is no respecter of persons; But in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. Acts 10.

34-35.

It is a common and artful device of the adversary to insinuate one part of scripture opposes and contradicts another. Hereby he aims to distract the minds and weaken the confidence of disciples, and to render the doctrines of grace of less esteem. Though the unlearned and unstable in the truths of free grace salvation, wrest this, as they do also other texts of scripture to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16. yet it was farthest from St. Peter to make this declaration, to subvert the fundamental truths of the gospel, and the one and only way of salvation taught by himself, namely, by election, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1. 2.

But he now perceived of a truth, that this blessing came equally alike, upon Gentiles as well as Jews. "God is no respecter of persons." This is a most comfortable truth to the vilest of the human race. There is nothing that claims respect in the person of one man above another in the sight of God. "All are alike corrupt and become abominable. There is no fear of God before our eyes. There is none that doth good; no not one." There is no difference. Jew and Gentile, publican and pharisee, are all upon a level. Blighted souls see and own this in deep humility and self-abasement: While proud pharisees challenge and claim respect from God, because they think their persons and characters are more amiable in his sight than others.

But saith Moses, "The Lord your God is a mighty and terrible God, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." Deut. 10. 17. What reward can poor sinners give to procure God's regard, bribe his justice, or avert his wrath? Do they naturally fear God and work righteousness in order to this? Lay thine hand upon thine heart, O soul; judge as in the sight of God. Say, was this thy natural conduct and practice towards him? God knoweth, to hate him and work wickedness, is the natural state and practice of thee and of all men. But yet he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, be he who or what he will, is accepted with God. For this is a full proof of his being accepted in the Beloved, Jesus, that the Lord hath put his fear in his heart, according to covenant promise, Jer. 32. 40. that he hath renewed him in righteousness and true holiness. Hence his practice is agreeable to his state. Prayers and alms come up before the Lord as a memorial of what is done on the heart. The same Lord over all, is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Rom. 10. 12, 13.

Which is not another [gospel], but there be some that would trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Gal. 1. 7.

It is the wisdom of a christian to hear preaching with an attentive mind, an humble heart, and a godly jealousy over what is spoken. The sweet sound of the gospel is joy to his heart, and as marrow and fatness to his soul; for it proclaims nothing but good news or glad tidings. This is its name. Its nature and properties perfectly agree therewith. Hence it is called, Acts 20. 24. The gospel of the grace of God; or good news of his free favour. And Ephes. 1. 13. "The gospel of salvation, or glad tidings of salvation by Christ only." It was the wisdom of Adam to distinguish and give a proper name to every creature of God. Every christian should imitate him in knowledge, to distinguish the law from the gospel, and to call each by its proper name. For when the law of works and gospel of grace are blended together, it puzzles the mind and disturbs the conscience. We may say of the gospel, as Tertullus said of Cæsar, "By thee we enjoy great quietness." Acts 24. 2. For by it the mind and conscience of the believer, is filled with peace and comfort. From hence springs his love to God, and holy conformity to his will. But preaching terms and conditions to be performed by us, in order to intitle to gospel-grace, hath a native tendency to distress the mind, weaken faith, damp love, deject hope, and of consequence make the believer less zealous of good works: Yet, through blindness and ignorance, some call this gospel; but Paul denies it: He says, "It is not another," he won't mention gospel. It deserves not the name; it is a meer system of man's devising. And if there is great talk of the interest of morality, and a specious pretence to holiness, it makes a great shew in the flesh, so as to trouble some, and deceive many. But such "pervert the gospel of Christ; the everlasting gospel." Rev. 14. 6. For that proclaims eternal election—everlasting love—an everlasting covenant of grace—brings everlasting consolations to the soul, by an everlasting righteousness through faith—and sure and certain salvation to every believer. The gospel, like some stately ship, is richly laden with the most munificent blessings of the patrimony of the Father, the last will and testament of a precious Saviour, freely consigned under the testimony of the Spirit, to poor lost, perishing sinners. O believer I study the immense value and riches of the gospel: be on thy guard, lest any deprive thy mind of its freedom and fulness. Gospel-perverters are conscience-troublers. Listen not to their specious guiles, lest thy mind be perplexed. But glory to our God, here is our mercy, though false teachers shall arise, though they may trouble, yet "it is impossible, saith our Saviour, that they should deceive the elect of God." Matt. 24. 24.

And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.
Zech. 6. 13.

With what rapture and ecstasy of soul the good old patriarch Israel heard of his son Joseph? Not only alive, but also governor of the land of Egypt. "It is enough," said he. As though he could enjoy no more. How then ought the hearts of poor sinners to be filled with joy, and fired with transport to hear that their friend and brother Jesus lives for evermore, that the government is upon his shoulders, that he is their King and their Priest upon his throne, that the counsel of peace is established, fixt and unalterably established between the Father and him, on their account? Surely, if we believe this as verily as Jacob believed the report concerning his son, we shall also cry out with him, IT IS ENOUGH, perfectly sufficient. More joyful news cannot be heard. More comfortable truth cannot be believed. Fuller evidence cannot be desired. Stronger proof cannot be given than is revealed of the covenant-transactions of the adorable Trinity, in behalf of sinners of mankind.

Here is THE LORD of HOSTS, and the MAN, the blessed Man, who is called the BRANCH. And see we not the third Person in the divine Essence? For the establishing of faith, be it ever remembered, though the Father and the Son only are often mentioned in scripture, yet the Lord the Spirit in his office is evidently to be seen and clearly to be known. For whatever is covenanted and agreed between God the Father and Son is manifested and revealed by the Holy Spirit. We had never heard of this blessed peace, had it not been by the Holy Ghost through the word of truth. Therefore it is "the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." 1 John 5. 6. Ever bear this in thy mind, disciple. As thou hadst not known sin, but by the law: So thou couldst not have any knowledge of peace and pardon, but by the Spirit. He is the revealer, sealer and applier of all grace, peace, love and holiness. "The love of the Father is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us." "He shall testify of me," saith Jesus: All my members shall be taught of him: "He shall glorify me." John 16. 14. Here is a peace established between heaven and earth, the righteous Lord and sinful man, firm as a rock, durable as the ages of eternity.

Thus God the Father is the author of peace. Jesus hath obtained peace by the blood of his cross. Rebels and traitors against God, are made the subjects of peace. The Spirit begets faith in the heart. He applies the peace of God which passeth all understanding to the soul through the faith of Jesus. And though all in nature, sin, satan, and the world are at war with us. Still "Jesus is our peace." Eph. 2. 14.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. Psalm 94. 19.

Vain thoughts and carnal reasonings, like impertinent visitors, often intrude upon the christian's mind. In this depraved state it cannot be otherwise, though born again of the Spirit, and our minds renewed by grace; still our old friends, our present foes, the world, the flesh, and the devil, will furnish us with various exercises from troublesome thoughts. That they do cause grief, are prayed against, and resisted, is a blessed evidence of a regenerate soul; which is also fed, delighted, and comforted with the spiritual truths of God's gracious word.

There are peculiar seasons when God's dear children are exercised with distressing gloomy thoughts. Afflictions are painful and grievous to the flesh; then how naturally do murmuring and repining thoughts arise? Are these the tokens of God's love? how can I who am thus visited with such sorrow, pain, and trouble, think the Lord loves me with the love of a tender father, or that I am his child? the sight of our vile polluted nature, corrupt lusts, sinful passions and affections, sink and discourage our spirits: A multitude of thoughts arise within; how can I have faith in Jesus, love to him, and delight in his ways, while I find so much in me contrary to his will, and unconformed to his image? If the Lord hides away his face, and withdraws the comforting sense of his presence, then these dejecting thoughts beset us: Then we are apt to think God is acting in wrath against us—his mercy is clean gone for ever. So saith the church of old, "The Lord hath forsaken me: My Lord hath forgotten me." Isa. 49. 14.

This is all very natural. But what says the voice of grace? Most cheering, most delighting to the harassed mind. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers out of them all: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Rev. 3. 19. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, but I will not forget thee." Isa. 49. 15. "This man [Jesus] receiveth sinners." Luke 15. 2. "His blood cleanseth from all sin." 1 John 1. 7.

God's immutable love, unchangeable covenant, eternal truth, sacred word, precious promises, and solemn oath, all stand engaged for the safety and salvation of souls redeemed by Jesus: "He that believeth on me shall never perish," saith Jesus. John 3. 15. Shall all the powers of earth and hell make Jesus, the God of truth, a liar? the bible is the christian's charter. It is our wisdom to study that, and to judge of God's love from his word and promises, not by our circumstances, frames and feelings: For,

Whate'er thou found'st him at the best,
He's at the worst the same.

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came unto thee, into thine holy temple. Jonah 2. 7.

In the prophet Jonah's conduct we have a true picture of human nature, and its strong opposition to the power and grace of God. Though Jesus clothes his saints with righteousness, and the Spirit sanctifies and renews them in the spirit of their minds; yet pride, obstinacy, and self-will still dwell in their corrupt fallen nature. The Spirit of truth and wisdom hath discovered the sins of his eminent prophets and faithful people, as well as their holy graces. This proves as a touchstone to try whether we have received the true grace of God in our hearts. A regenerate soul will never draw any encouragement to indulge himself in sin and rebellion against God because he reads of David's complicated sins of murder and adultery—of Jonah's fleeing from and provoking behaviour to God—or of Peter's sad denial of Jesus with abominable oaths and curses. If scripture truths prove as poison, it is only to reprobate minds; but they are ever wholesome food to sanctified hearts; Such behold in the falls of the saints of old, the evils to which themselves are ever liable. If they are kept, they are humble, and give the Saviour all the glory. If they are fallen low, they behold how the Lord dealt with his people of old. They see his loving-kindness, faithfulness and truth never failed them.

Hence the Holy Spirit stirs up and encourages poor broken-hearted backsliding souls to trust in covenant-love. A sense of pain brings the body into a weak fainting state. So a sense of sin, fear of God's wrath, the hidings of his face in Christ Jesus, makes the soul faint and languid. But in the lowest ebb of hope, and under the weakest frames of soul, the sanctified memory, though it bears a faithful record of past sins, yet it is also a precious repository of God's free-grace truths, and most precious promises in Christ Jesus. His human nature is the TEMPLE, in which God and man meet—to which sinners look—and through which grace is bestowed. Hence the poor soul is excited to mourn under the displeasure of an offended Father; and yet to cry to him in hope against hope—to pray to him in faith though it has not one encouraging symptom in nature and self. But looking for all in Jesus, O most blessed words from the Father to humble believing souls! "I will remember their sins no more." Jer. 31. 34.

My fainting flesh had dy'd with grief,
Had not my soul believ'd
To see thy grace provide relief,
Nor was my hope deceiv'd.

Wait on the Lord, ye trembling saints,
And keep your spirits up;
He'll raise your spirit when it faints,
And far exceed your hope,

And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. 1 John 2. 28.

We say, 'A burnt child dreads the fire.' So a soul, who has fallen into any snare of the enemy, when rescued by grace, fears the same evil, and wisely cautions his brethren against it. I fell, do you beware. So it was even with the beloved disciple John. He did not abide by Jesus in the day of trial, but, with the rest of the disciples, forsook him and fled. But who can tell the sorrow of his heart? who can paint the distress of his mind, and the shame of his face, when Jesus appeared to them, and John said, "It is the Lord?" John 21. 7.

And is Jesus gone but for a season? will he assuredly come again and take all his little children home? and do we expect his appearance? do we believe we shall shortly see him in the glory of his father and of his holy angels? What constancy and courage should this inspire us with! how ought christian soldiers to abide in Jesus the captain of their salvation—abide in a steady profession of his name—in a firm reliance upon his death and atonement—in a confident hope of being righteous in him, "accepted in him the Beloved"—in an uninterrupted obedience to his will—and an earnest endeavour to follow his example: and above all, to abide in child-like dependence upon him—loving to be near him—to converse freely with him—and pour out our hearts before him—simply to tell him of our weakness and dangers, our troubles and sorrows—and pray him to keep us from falling. This is sweet and pleasant, thus always to set the Lord before us. The more we thus delight ourselves in the Lord, we grow dead to all things else. But, soul, be assured, that conformity to a vain world, complying with its sinful customs, gratifying the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; as this is not abiding in the teachings of Jesus, so doth it tend to weaken thy confidence in him, and bring shame upon thy soul before him. Thou findest it even now, when thou dost approach unto his throne of grace, how often, from thy foolish forsaking the Master and his ways, have thy hands been made to hang down, thy knees feeble, thy heart faint, and holy boldness in Jesus hath forsaken thee, and shame and doubts and fears have overspread thee.

I cannot bear thy absence, Lord;
My life expires if thou depart;
Be thou, my heart, still near my God,
And thou, my God, be near my heart.

I was not born for earth or sin,
Nor can I live on things so vile;
Yet will I stay my Father's time,
And hope and wait for heav'n awhile.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them?
 Luke 18. 7.

Thus our Lord concludes a parable he had delivered to this end, "that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Our Saviour well knew how ready his disciples' hands are to hang down, and their hearts to grow languid and faint; so as to be remiss in this duty. Therefore his loving heart would stir up and encourage them to a constant perseverance in prayer; assuring them that God's ears are ever open to their cry, and his omnipotent arm would most certainly avenge the enemies of his own elect, and speedily deliver them from all their troubles. Hath the Lord loved his people with an everlasting love? hath he chosen them in Christ Jesus, from before the foundation of the world? hath he given them the precious faith of his own elect, and the cry of his children, *Abba, Father?* and shall an unjust judge deliver one he cares not for, and the just and holy Lord leave any of his little ones to the power of any adversary? Oh, believer, never indulge such an hard thought of thy heavenly Father! Doth sin make thee cry? Satan cause thee to call? the world excite thee to complain? Blessed be God for a throne of grace to go to, and an all-powerful King to protect and conquer for us. Duty is thine; be careful not to neglect it. Deliverance is the Lord's; be assured in his own time, way and manner thou shalt receive it. As thy prayers, however frequent or fervent, do not influence the Lord to elect and choose thee to salvation. No; but the cry of a heart believing in Jesus is an evidence of election. Therefore thou art in Christ Jesus always acceptable to God; so are thy prayers through him: "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Prov. 15. 8. Though thy comfort may be often damped through the coldness and deadness of thy duty; yet art thou to persevere conscientiously in duty. Why? To profess thy subjection to the Lord: "He is thy Lord, worship thou him." Psalm 45. 11. Therefore prefer a cold prayer before none at all. It is better to bring words that want a soul, than neglect to bring our bodies which have souls in them: "Take with you words." Hos. 14. 2. and say, if you cannot take the spirit and pray. But this is the only foundation of hope, not our frames in duty; but the prevalency of Christ's intercession for us before the throne, and the faithful promises of God in him, by the word and Spirit of truth.

In thine own ways, O God of love,
 We wait the visits of thy grace;

Our souls desire is to thy name,
 And the remembrance of thy face.

Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.
Matt. 7. 14.

So Jesus taught. But that teachers in every age have taught a broad way and wide gate, and that the greatest part have readily received their doctrine, is a melancholy truth. Therefore Jesus adds, "Beware of false prophets." It is the sole prerogative of the king of saints to open a gate, and make a way to his own kingdom.

Glory to our God, who in sovereign grace and everlasting love, hath done this! And the gospel proclaims, FREE WELCOME; COME WHO WILL: ENTER FREELY; WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE. Jesus is the strait gate of God's love. He is the gate of righteousness; by him we enter with access to God, and stand justified and accepted before him. Jesus is the narrow way, for by the blood of his cross he hath made peace, atoned for the sins of transgressors by one offering. Hence called strait and narrow, because the only way to life is by one Man, one righteousness, one atonement. Thus it is a gate of love, a way of grace, too strait a gate for blind men to see; too narrow a way for proud natural men to submit to and walk in. Hence "few there be that find it." But it is very awful to think of, whoever takes any other way, or aims to enter by any other gate, goeth in the broad road to destruction. His boldness and confidence is no proof that he is right, but a melancholy sign that he is blind and deceived; for "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes." Prov. 12. 15. And "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. 14. 12. But who ever enters the kingdom by Jesus, shall feed in the pastures of grace, truth and love; he shall drink of the river of consolation, and be nourished up to eternal life. And like a person who takes up his residence for life in a more delightful kingdom than he was born in: So the believer is conformed to the laws, speaks the language of the New Jerusalem, and "hates the garment spotted with the flesh." Thus the Holy Spirit leads the blind by the way they knew not, even the right way to peace, love, holiness, happiness, eternal life and salvation. Thus to a little flock it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom."

Christ is the sure foundation-stone,
Which God in Zion lays,
To build our heav'nly hopes upon,
And his eternal praise.

Chosen of God to sinners dear,
And saints adore the name;
They trust their whole salvation here,
Nor shall they suffer shame.

The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him. Hab. 2. 20.

What God's people of old were favoured with in type and figure, we now enjoy in reality and substance. The temple of old was a glorious type of the body of Jesus. In it Jehovah made his presence known. Here troubled consciences sought relief. The mercy-seat was set up for poor sinners to approach to. Here Jehovah was consulted: And from hence he spoke in grace and love to his people, and silenced every guilty fear. Thus God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Was this ministration glorious in the eyes of spiritual worshippers? How doth ours exceed in glory! The fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily in Jesus. This is the temple in which God delights to dwell. Hence grace is dispensed—peace communicated—mercy bestowed—life and salvation freely given.

Here, christian, believe and adore—behold and wonder—look and admire—admire and love! Jesus is the Lord thy God, worship thou him. Hear the gracious words that are spoken from this living temple. KEEP SILENCE, at the last and most joyful words Jesus spoke, IT IS FINISHED: My Father's work is done—my dear member's salvation is completed. Hear this with astonishment and love, and let the voice of pride and self-righteousness be heard no more, but the voice of Jesus only. So shall words of legal terror and wrath be silenced, conscience shall be at peace, and the murmuring cry, and the lustful desires of the flesh shall cease. Thus attend the voice of Jesus.

Did the Lord thus speak in and from this temple to his children? Yea more, he dwells in them. Each sanctified member of Jesus is also called his holy temple, 1 Cor. 3. 17. What exalted honour are believers called to? "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" chap. 6. 19. Most powerful motive to holiness! Be attentive to the voice of Jesus within! In the temple of thy heart the throne of his residence. Here he speaketh comfort to the troubled heart. Like as Jesus spake to the tempestuous sea, "PEACE, be still." And as he called to his affrighted disciples, "It is I, be not afraid." So to the listening soul, who saith, "I will watch, to hear what he will say"—to every waiting heart at his feet, Jesus will speak silence to the clamours of the law, the commotions of sin, and the accusations of Satan. Thus "in his temple" [of Jesus] "doth every man speak of his glory." *Palm 29. 9.*

Send comforts down from thy right hand, And in thy temple let us see
While we pass thro' this barren land, A glimpse of love, a glimpse of thee,

He will guide you into all truth. John 16. 13.

Our Lord gives his disciples a farther exhibition of the covenant of grace, and a fuller display of the grace of the covenant. Here is a full proof of the personality of the holy Spirit, and also of his sovereignty in his operations and influences upon his members. Christ did not tell his apostles, 'If ye will but be yielding and tractable, and suffer my Spirit to lead you, ye shall enjoy his kind assistance.' No: this were to degrade the glory of this divine Agent, to exalt the pride of the creature, and render the gracious guidance of the Spirit dependent upon the will of the flesh, as though he was to be only a meer auxiliary to aid and assist man's pious motions and good dispositions. Far be such thoughts from our hearts. All glory to this heavenly Paraclete; "he will work, and none shall let him." He will guide into the whole truth of covenant-love and salvation by Jesus Christ; who is the adorable person, the Spirit is to testify of, and to glorify in the sight, heart and affections of his people. The apostles themselves were at this time in much ignorance about, and strong prejudices against many things concerning Jesus and themselves. As to the nature of his kingdom, they still dreamed of the grandeur of a temporal one. Their prejudices were great in favour of their own nation, and they thought "God was a respecter of persons," of Jews above Gentiles; and were very hardly brought to give up the types and shadows, particularly the sign of the covenant-circumcision, as not fully seeing that Jesus, the substance, was really come, who is essentially THE TRUTH itself.

There is no hope for poor guilty sinners but in the truth. For when the Lord declares his name to Moses, this is part of it, "I will by no means clear the GUILTY." Exod. 34. 7. This must be very distressing to sensible sinners. I know one who has found it so. But the Spirit teaches the truth of God inviolably preserved, while the guilty sinner is perfectly saved in the Lord Jesus with an everlasting salvation. Jesus stood as our guilty substitute. The Lord laid our iniquities upon him. He suffered, as our surety, all the wrath due to our transgressions, "and with his stripes we are healed." Isa. 53. 5. The reputed guilty died. The real guilty become guiltless. "His blood cleanseth them from all sin." 1 John 1. 7. Glory to the condescending Lord, who, as it were, takes us by the hand, and leads us out of the dark, dangerous, destructive paths of natural pride, self-will, and self-righteousness, "and gives us repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth," 2 Tim. 2. 25. "that we may be sanctified through the truth," John 17. 19. enjoy "love that rejoiceth in the truth," 1 Cor. 13. 6. "and worship the Father in spirit and in truth." 1 John 4. 24. Thus, to undone sinners, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1. 17.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: (for he is faithful that promised). Heb. 10. 23.

Poor christian! thy profession is envied by the malice of devils; it is the scorn and ridicule of natural men; it is contrary to thy carnal nature. Hence thou hast the combined force of a threefold alliance in arms against thee; if that by any means they may rob thee of thy hope. Happy christian! who, like thy blessed Master, in the face of every adversary, hast "witnessed a good profession." 1 Tim. 6. 13. What an animating exhortation, backed with a most precious assertion, is this! Though thou must expect to be assaulted by the rage of devils, treated with scorn and contempt from wicked men; and often put to a stand by the carnal reasonings of thy flesh. Here is thy duty: "Hold fast" in spite of all opposition. Hold fast by the truths of God. "It is written," is sufficient to silence every carnal argument, to support thy soul against every attack from the wile of the world. This was a weapon with which thy blessed Master put satan to flight. Thus defend thyself with the sword of the Spirit against every foe. Thus encourage thy soul daily to "hold fast its profession." God's revealed truths are faith's objects, faith's confidence, faith's security; for God's foundation standeth sure. "He is faithful that promised." Why then should thy mind at any time waver, agitate, or be tossed to and fro? To confide in the word, promises, and oath of a faithful covenant-keeping, promise-fulfilling God, is the glory of thy soul, and to the glory of thy Lord. Is Jesus thy profession? is all thy hope in him? all thy expectation from him? Is he thy all for pardon, for righteousness, for sanctification, for wisdom, and eternal redemption? dost thou profess him thy alpha and omega? Then be careful for nothing but to please him—fear thou nothing but what may offend him—whilst thou lookest to him only, thou wilt be of good courage—thy foes are his conquered enemies—when they oppose, attack, assault, it is to try thy faith, that thou mayest glorify him the more. Attend his sweet call from heaven above to all his conflicting members below: "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come." Rev. 2. 25.

The fearful soul, that tires and faints,
And walks the ways of God no more,
Is but esteem'd almost a saint,
And makes his own destruction sure.

Lord, let not all my hopes be vain,
Create my heart entirely new,
Which hypocrites could ne'er attain,
Which base apostates never knew.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
Ezek. 36. 26.

As God's Heart of love is towards his people in Christ Jesus, so his Spirit of power works in them by Christ Jesus, according to the counsel of his will, that they may love and serve him. By the blood of Jesus they are cleansed from their sin, filthiness and idols. By the Spirit of truth and holiness, they are inwardly sanctified; a new heart and a new spirit is put within them, and they are enabled outwardly to walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments to do them. Thus "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 5. 17, 18. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are past away; behold, all things are become new."

'A christian (as Luther says) is a new creature in a new world.' He has a new heart—he is under a new government—serves a new master—obeys new laws—is actuated by new fears—influenced by new love—animated with new delights and new joys. And all this is suitable to a new heart and spirit which is put within him. 'Ah, (says a disciple) this is sweet in theory, and true in doctrine; but in experience I find and feel, to my grief, an old nature of sin and unbelief; and groan under the body of death.' This also is very true: Yea it is perfectly consistent with a state of regeneration. Saints of God in all ages found it so, while in the body. The Lord himself, in this very text, accounts for it: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Naturally thy heart is as hard as a stone. Thou couldst neither feel sin, mourn for sin, nor be humbled under a sense of sin. But through the blood of Jesus, applied by the Spirit, in believing the truth, thou hast a soft, tender, yielding heart—a heart of flesh—susceptible of impressions—looking to Jesus by faith—melted by love—and mourning for sin. Hence, though "thou hast no confidence in the flesh, and in it dwells no good thing;" yet thou dost "delight in the law of God after the inward man; and hast continual cause of rejoicing in Christ Jesus."

Our heart, that flinty stubborn thing,
That terrors cannot move,
That fears no threatnings of God's wrath,
Shall be dissolv'd by love.

There shall his sacred Spirit dwell,
And deep engrave his law,

And ev'ry motion of our souls
To swift obedience draw.

Thus will he pour salvation down,
And we shall render praise;
We the dear people of his love,
And he our God of grace.

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. John 10. 27.

All our mercies in time and eternity flow from Jesus' knowing us as his sheep. To all such salvation is certain; both as to present grace and future glory. As a shepherd knoweth every sheep committed to his care; so doth our good Shepherd. All his sheep were beloved of the Father, "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," and given to Jesus in the eternal counsel. He became surety for them; redeemed them to God by his own blood. Hence he calls them "my sheep."—mine by gift—mine by redemption. Thus he hath a distinct knowledge of them, and special property in them; for "died Jesus as a fool dieth?" spilt he his precious blood at uncertainty? paid he the dreadful debt to law and justice at a peradventure, whether any soul should receive the eternal benefit? Surely not: For his undertaking was in infinite wisdom and counsel, as well as wonderful in grace and love. Jesus well knew the nature-state of his sheep; that they were all gone astray, and turned every one to his own way, and that they would count their shepherd an enemy, and fly from him as a destroyer if left to themselves. Therefore he doth somewhat in them by his Spirit, as well as die for them in his person. Hence they have the properties of his own sheep; they give evidence of it; for they hear the voice of Jesus and follow him. They live upon his truth and feed upon his love. Alas! what deplorable circumstances were they all in when this sweet voice first reached their ears? when this powerful voice affected their hearts? It was a sound of glad tidings, love, and salvation to lost sheep indeed. It proved effectual to recal our souls from the dangerous and destructive paths in which we had lost ourselves. Truly we also may say of Jesus, "never man spake like this man." The power of his voice begets obedience; and, like the blind man restored to sight, we follow Jesus as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We know he hath the words of eternal life. To whom then should we go but to him? and it is the delight of our souls to see the footsteps of our Shepherd, that we may tread therein. Though, O soul, thou canst not see whether thy name is wrote in the Lamb's book of life; yet in the light of the Spirit thou mayest read thy name in the book of grace, if thou hast heard the voice of Jesus, and art following him.

The Lord my Shepherd is,
I shall be well supply'd;
Since he is mine, and I am his,
What can I want beside?

He leads me to the place
Where heav'nly pasture grows,
Where living waters gently pass,
And full salvation flows.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1. 9.

Doubtless there are many confessions of sin made by the lips of men, which are vain and fruitless. Yea, a man may be under a sense of legal terror and wrath in his conscience, and, like Judas, in the anguish of his spirit confess that he has sinned, and yet never obtain forgiveness from God. But every believer in Jesus is made a priest unto God, to offer spiritual sacrifices by Jesus Christ. And as the high-priest under the law laid both his hands upon the scape-goat and made confession of sins, Levit. 16. 21. so the christian, every anointed one, lays both his hands of faith and hope on Jesus Christ, confessing the evil of sin, the desert of sin, the sin of his nature, and the sin of his life, and pleads for forgiveness. The sacrifice of Jesus is the alone object of his faith. And the blood of the Lamb is his only hope for pardon. This will be the daily exercise of believing souls; for we have daily need both of pardon and cleansing.

Such souls thus confessing sin, are not left in doubtful suspense. Do not argue, God is merciful, and perhaps he may forgive sin: But through the perfection of the one atonement of Jesus, by the word of truth, they are fully assured, God absolutely will pardon; not merely as an act of mercy, but because he is faithful and just. FAITHFUL to his own word, his oath, his counsels and covenant-promises. JUST to fulfil the engagements entered into with Jesus, and to bestow what the precious blood of his Son hath merited and procured for poor sinners. And thus, through the faith of his heart, the sinner is brought to make confession of sin with his mouth, with godly sorrow and holy shame for sin, and sincere abhorrence and detestation of sin. And lest such a soul should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," the Lord will assuredly "cleanse him from all unrighteousness—sprinkle his heart from a guilty conscience—cleanse his mind from every guilty fear, through the application of the blood of Jesus by the holy Spirit. So that he shall have "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Isa. 61. 3.

And now the scales have left mine eyes,
Now I begin to see;

O the curs'd deeds my sins have done:
What murd'rous things they be?

What, is't for crimes that I had done,
My dearest Lord was slain,

When justice seiz'd God's only Son,
And put his soul to pain?

Forgive my guilt, O Prince of peace,
Nor let me wound thee more;

Hence from my heart, ye sins, be gone,
For Jesus I adore.

JULY 5.

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Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. 1 Pct. 1. 6.

Though a christian be not always in a joyful frame, yet he has abundant cause to "rejoice always." Though many things may rob him of his frame, yet nothing can deprive him of the foundation of his comfort. Happy for us, this is permanent and abiding for ever: for it is founded in the love and truth of an unchangeable God. These disciples to whom the apostles wrote, "rejoiced greatly." Why? was it because they were perfectly delivered from a body of sin and death? that they were not like thee and me, O disciple, sinners? No; but the matter of their joy and rejoicing was, their "election according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father—sanctification by the Spirit—sprinkling of the blood of Jesus—their being begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus"—and the assurance of being "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." Wherein, "in these soul-comforting truths ye greatly rejoice," saith Peter.

Thus, believer, thou loest the streams that make glad the citizens of heaven flow from the ocean of God's everlasting love. The more thou drinkest of this water, it will allay the thirst of pride and self-righteousness, and make thy soul glory and rejoice in Christ Jesus alone. But here is a full conviction, that these joyful souls were imprisoned in a body of sinful flesh: they had their heavy seasons—were assaulted with manifold temptations—there was a season for them, and a need be also. So there is now. Wilt not thou be content to go the same path? canst thou expect freedom from such exercises? Deceive not thy self. It is all the children's lot; and the Father sees it as needful as our food: Yea, he makes it profitable also. Whilst thou art in the flesh sin dwelleth in thee—temptation will assault thee—heaviness and affliction will bow thee down. Soul-exercises are faith's trials. In the issue they are made world-conquering, creature-humbling, Jesus-endeavouring, heavenly-longing blessings. "I am oppressed," said Hezekiah: What then, doth he sink under it? No; it called forth the exercise of his faith and prayer to the Saviour: "Do thou undertake for me." So the Psalmist, Psalm 116. 3. "I found trouble and sorrow." What was the blessing of it? Self-despair. He saw no help else where: "Then called I on the name of the Lord." Verily thy faith must be tried—thy patience exercised—prayer excited, as well as rejoicing of soul. Thy Saviour loves to have it so. The government is upon his shoulders. Here is thy mercy, thou hast a Jesus to trust in—fly to and call upon: while the wicked, like Saul, seek to the sorcery and witchcraft of the world to sooth their sorrows, and relieve their troubles.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.
 Matt. 5. 44.

Love is the very badge and characteristic of a disciple of Jesus. Love is of God. All tempers and passions which are contrary to love, "are earthly, sensual, and devilish." Let no disciple say, This is an hard saying; who can obey it? Nay, but it is the command of thy loving Saviour—he practised it—he has left thee an example. To this end art thou born from above of the Spirit of love; and art possessed with "faith, which worketh by love." Therefore though hard and impossible it may seem to carnal reason, and to flesh and blood, yet we are under the indispensable obligation to follow the steps, and obey the commands of that Jesus, who loved us and died for us, though his enemies. He hath blessed us, and prays for us, and does good unto us, though we have rebellious natures, which are at enmity and hatred against him. Never, never till thine enemy's hatred and variance against thee exceeds thine to thy Lord, art thou at liberty to dispense with this command. It is for the health and profit of thy soul. In keeping this command of love, verily there is a great reward of inward peace and consolation from the God of love. So shalt thou enjoy the witness of his Spirit of thine adoption. Tell thy Lord of thine enemies, and pray for them by name. See the blessed effects of love upon the heart of a most bitter and implacable foe, 1 Sam. 24. See how David, the man after God's own heart, acts—how his faith works by love. When his persecuting foe, Saul, was delivered into his hand, love would not suffer him to do him any hurt. Yea love smote his heart for only cutting off the skirts of his robe. Hear the pathetic cry of the bloody-minded Saul; struck with astonishment, and melted by love, he said, "Is this thy voice, [such thy conduct to me] my son David?" and he wept. Thou art more righteous than I—thou hast rewarded me good for evil—the Lord reward thee for it." Admire and imitate. Love is the weapon of thy spiritual warfare; by it thou art sure to prevail against, and conquer thine enemy. Therefore "if he hunger feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." So strive to burn up his wrath and melt him into affection.

Lord, shall thy bright example shine	The Lord shall on my side engage,
In vain before my eyes?	And in my Saviour's name
Give me a soul akin to thine,	I shall defeat their pride and rage,
To love my enemies,	Who slander and condemn,

Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Heb. 4. 1.

Fear without faith enslaves the soul to wrath and bondage. Faith without fear tends to licentiousness. But a loving filial fear of offending our dear Father and precious Saviour, ever accompanies the exercise of faith in the heart. Jesus is the rest of his people. This rest is by promise: therefore it is sure to all his spiritual seed. They all enter into it, and enjoy it by faith. But, from awful instances of others falling away from the hope of Jesus, the apostles ever exercised a loving fear and a godly jealousy over their dear converts, lest any of them should seem to come short through unbelief. The Lord only knoweth who are his elect according to the covenant of grace. This did not lie open to the eyes even of his chosen apostles. It could only be made manifest by their faith and its fruits. Hence they were continually exhorting disciples to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. To work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Not with a fear or suspicion of the love and faithfulness of a covenant God; Nothing doubting the finished work of Jesus' salvation, or the safety and security of every believer in him. These are truths of the greatest certainty, and are to be held with the strongest confidence: but so fear lest their own souls should at any time be so captivated by the devices of satan, so enslaved by the snares of the world, so allured by the lusts of the flesh, and the pleasures of sense, so kept from Jesus by the workings of unbelief, that their conduct should give sad evidence of their state; lest it should seem they sought other lovers but Jesus, and other rest but in him, and other hope, and other comforts beside those which the gospel affords.

So the apostles were excited to a godly fear over their professing brethren. Blessed also art thou, disciple, who thus fearest continually. By this evangelical fear verily thou shalt be kept from departing from the Lord. Count not this fear legal, as though it tended to bondage. Nay, but it is a fruit of thy Father's love—a grace of the gospel-covenant. It is as essential to the health of thy soul, as faith is to thy being a disciple of Jesus. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge." Prov. 14: 26.

Praise, everlasting praise be paid To him that earth's foundation laid;
Praise to the God, whose strong decrees And there, as strong, as his decrees,
Sway the creation as he pleases. He sets his kindest promises.

Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? Numb. 20. 10.

It is most probable that this harsh, severe speech of Moses, cut many of God's dear children to the very heart, and struck terror to their souls. Here we see the true nature of the holy law. It demands attention with power and authority. HEAR, its voice is of terror—it speaks nothing but wrath to poor sinners' consciences—it calls them by their proper name, REBELS. And what can the poor guilty trembling soul do to appease its terror, and escape the wrath to come? Nothing. Alas, it “concludes him under sin,” and leaves him as much without hope of mercy, as he has of drawing liquid streams from a barren rock. But by the gospel eye of faith we see that spiritual rock Jesus whom the law struck, and thirsty souls in all ages drink living water from this rock of their salvation. Jehovah loves his people; from the affection of his heart (notwithstanding their murmurings) he commands his servant to procure drink for them: But meek Moses reproves the children in wrath, and in anger strikes the rock twice; and the Lord renews his conduct and expressions toward them. Because the dear Lamb stood up in their behalf, and spoke in effect what Paul wrote to Philemon concerning Onesimus: “What my people owe to law and justice, put that to my account; I will pay all.” Therefore the sword of divine justice “awoke against him;” he was struck by the severe rod of the law; and hence cooling streams of mercy, refreshing streams of peace, reviving streams of love, richly gushed out to parched, thirsty, dying souls. Yea, the water of this rock follows believing souls, as it did the children of Israel, all the way through the wilderness of this world. They all drink the same spiritual drink at the hands of the Spirit. What consolation to disciples to consider that our spiritual Rock ever stands steadfast and unmoveable; that all who are built upon him are safe and secure from every danger? The storms of temptations, the waves of corruption may dash against them, but can never prevail. Jesus sustains them—everlasting love secures them—omnipotence surrounds them, and even justice and truth are engaged in their defence. Yes, poor believing soul, though the law rates thee a rebel, and speaks in wrath against thee as such, though thou dost exceedingly quake and fear, yet the waters of salvation flow plentifully from Jesus the rock of ages. His work is perfect. It is thy mercy to look to this rock and rejoice.

Rebels, we broke our Maker's laws; The law proclaims no terror now,
He from the threatening sets us free, And Sinai's thunder roars no more;
Bore the full vengeance on his cross, From all his wounds new blessings flow,
And nail'd the curses to the tree, A sea of joy without a shore.

But faith which worketh by love. Gal. 5. 6.

In the religion of Jesus, every hope of salvation is excluded but what springs from faith. For faith includes every blessing of the covenant love of a gracious Lord. The faith of God's elect hath God for its author—his truths for its object—his word for its warrant—his power for its support—his glory for its aim—and love for its inseparable companion. Thus the faith of the gospel is ever distinguished from natural notions. But it is natural to us all, to mistake error for truth, fancy for faith, the heat of animal passions for love. Yea and also to be very confident herein. But true faith ever worketh by love; even that "love which rejoiceth in the truth." 1 Cor. 13. 6. Jesus is essentially THE TRUTH. All the love which God hath to us centers in him, and flows to us through him. Hence "God hath chosen us IN him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before God IN LOVE: having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted IN the Beloved, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things IN Christ;" Eph. 1. 3—6. "and are made the righteousness of God IN Christ." 2 Cor. 5. 21.

Thus faith hath truth for its foundation, and from the knowledge of the truth it worketh by love. Love to the God of truth, and to our brethren, (not as being of this sect or that party, but) "for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them." 2 John ver. 1, 2. There is no fellowship in love, but what consists in the light of the truth. Thus our Lord and we "have fellowship one with another." 1 John 1. 7. Take away any part of God's truth, and you subvert the foundation of faith, and prevent the operations of love. If we reject the truth, that we are elected to salvation in Christ, redeemed by the blood of Christ, sanctified in Christ, righteous by the righteousness of Christ, and safely kept by the power of God through the faith of Christ to eternal salvation, faith is made void, and love ceaseth to exist. Truth and love are equally precious. "The belief of the truth" is the precious life of faith. Love is the blessed fruit of faith. Herein consists thy blessedness, O christian! "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Therefore we are exhorted, "Hold fast the form of sound words, in FAITH AND LOVE, which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 1. 13. So by "speaking the TRUTH IN LOVE, we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Eph. 4. 15.

Happy the heart where graces reign,
Where love inspires the breast;
Love is the brightest of the train,
And strengthens all the rest.

This is the grace that lives and sings,
When faith and hope shall cease;
'Tis this shall strike our joyful strings
In the sweet realms of bliss.

I will not leave you comfortless. John 14. 18.

We are born into this world crying—we live in it complaining—and we go out of it sorrowing, for any comfort it can yield us. When cardinal Woolsey was cast off by his king, he said, 'Had I served my God as faithfully as I have my prince, he would not have treated me thus.' The more we know of this world, the more we see of its folly and vanity. The more we enjoy of its smiles and friendship, so much the more sorrow and reluctance we have in leaving it. But with our heavenly Friend it is quite otherwise. "He never leaves nor forsakes: whom he loves, he loves unto the end"—nor shall his dear disciples ever be left in a comfortless state of sorrow and dejection, like poor orphans, cast upon a wide world of sorrow and woe, without any kind heart to pity them, or kind hand to relieve them: for when all other comforts forsake us, still Jesus abides by us: His Spirit comforts us, by shewing what he is to us; what he has done, is doing, and will do for us. The apostles had full experience of the promise of their gracious Lord. "He comforteth us in all our tribulations." 2 Cor. 1. 4. "In me ye shall have peace." And why doth our Lord also assure us, "In the the world ye shall have tribulation?" John 16. 33. truly he loves us too well to suffer us to take up our rest in it. If with Paul at Ephesus, after the manner of men, we fight with beasts, 1 Cor. 15. 32. All this is suffered to render the world more inhospitable—to make us loathe swine's food, the husks of this world, that the bread of life, the comforts of Jesus, may be more feasted upon and enjoyed. Why is sin suffered to dwell in us, and to make us grope and distress us, but to make it more hateful to us—to put us out of conceit of ourselves and our own righteousness—and to endear the atonement and righteousness of Jesus to our souls—that all our comfort should spring from him? Why is Satan suffered to harass and perplex us, but that as the sheep, of Christ's pasture, we should keep close to our shepherd; or like frightened children, when surly dogs bark at them, fear keeps them near their father's protection, and within the bounds of his habitation? So we find the comforts of living near our Saviour. Do we carry about a weak disordered body? Here is our comfort, "We faint not, knowing that the outward man decayeth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. 4. 16.

Thus, glory to our loving Lord! "he comforts us concerning our faith, and causes us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and to glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us." Rom. 5. 2—5.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Rom. 8. 28.

A poor sensible sinner would naturally be ready to make one exception here, and say, "How can sin, which I know and feel to be the very worst of all evils, work for any good?" But the Holy Ghost hath not excepted even this. Will any one say, hence let us do evil that good may come? St. Paul makes a terrible application to such, "Whose damnation is just." Rom. 3. 8. Therefore this is not the language of a believer's heart, his salvation is sure, for "he that believes shall be saved." Such, and such only know, most assuredly know that all things work together for good. They love God, and this love inspires them with hatred to sin. But yet they are sinners, both by original sin and actual transgression; nevertheless, through the all-wise over-ruling power of a gracious covenant God, even the worst of evils, sin, shall work for his glory and their good. Is the art of a chemist able to extract the most salutary medicine from noxious and poisonous ingredients? and cannot the infinitely wise Jehovah, who at the beginning spoke chaos and confusion into beauty and order, and darkness into light, make evil to work for good? He hath done it. Canst thou think of that world of sin and evil which was produced by the fall of man? Dost thou not know the still greater good which it has been made to work for man by Jesus Christ? If man had not sinned the glorious attributes of Jehovah had not been so eminently displayed. As this is true of a world of sin in general, so also of every sin in particular. Sin is natural to man. To make it work for good is the supernatural power of God. Sin should never have entered into the world, nor should it continue in God's people, was it not to magnify his grace, and prove to the glory of his name. Judas delivers Christ to death for gain, the Jews for envy, Pilate for fear. The devil provokes each through enmity. God makes all work for the spiritual good and eternal salvation of his people. Peter's fall shall be made to work for his humility and self-diffidence, and to strengthen his bretheren.

'Sin, saith St. Austin, first wrote sorrow, and now godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of, to the death of sin; so the daughter destroys the mother.' How should this excite wonder and astonishment! and cause us to cry out with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Rom. 11. 33.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.
Rom. 8. 26.

How reviving to the soul, how encouraging to the mind of a disciple is it to hear the experience of his brethren and companions in the faith of Jesus? To this end the blessed Spirit hath caused the saints of old to leave on record his dealings of love with their souls. Thus is the word of God most valuable for our instruction, edification, and comfort. Let no poor follower of the Lamb think he is singular in feeling an insupportable pressure of infirmities. No; the children of God in all ages knew and felt the same; whether prophets or apostles, none were perfectly free from inward distresses, temptations, fears, dejections, &c. All which arise from our still possessing a fallen nature, which subjects us to these sensations and feelings. They are our burdens; we cannot but feel them and groan under them: Shortly we shall be perfectly free from them. This is our glorious hope.

But alas! how oft doth present distress defeat our hopes—infirmities bow down the soul—faith grows languid—love declines—hope seems at the last gasp, just as if giving up the ghost. And indeed all would end in gloomy dejection and melancholy despair, if the Lord was entirely to forsake his new creation: But that never can be, while the Father loves, the Lamb pleads, and the Spirit hath power to help. Therefore when the Spirit sees the souls of his charge pressed above measure in themselves, and ready to sink under their burdens, he reaches forth a tender hand of assistance—helps against infirmities, by enabling the soul to look to the adorable Jesus—to an everlasting covenant—to precious promises—to a reconciled God—and puts this sweet cry in the heart, Abba Father. Then confidence revives—hope springs afresh—love is excited—and the power of prayer breaks forth in the heart, and ascends in sweet fervor from the soul. Whatever flesh and blood may alledge to the contrary, infirmities are made profitable to the soul; or St. Paul would never have declared, “most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities.” Why? is there any good in them for which they should be desired? No; but “that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2 Cor. 12. 9.

Eternal Spirit! we confess
And sing the wonders of thy grace;
Thy pow’r conveys our blessings down
From God the Father and the Son.

Enlighten’d by thy heav’nly ray,
Our shades and darkness turn to day:

Thine inward teachings make us know
Our danger and our refuge too.

The troubled conscience knows thy voice,
Thy cheating views awake our joys;
Thy words allay the stormy wind,
And calm the surges of the mind.

The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.
Deut. 30. 6.

Even Moses, who delivered the fiery law of wrath and terror, preaches like a Barnabas, a son of consolation. In this chapter we have a precious enumeration of new-covenant blessings and evangelical promises, all settled in the eternal counsels between Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit, and founded in infinite wisdom, everlasting love, and immutable faithfulness; therefore sure to all the seed "who are chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world." Such is the solid foundation of gospel-faith and hope. The happy heirs of it the Lord God sets a special mark upon, whereby he owns them as his peculiar ones; and which is also an evidence to them of their special relation to him. As the Father loved his people before time, and gave them to Jesus, who hath redeemed them in the fulness of time; so also, at the appointed time, the Lord the Spirit performs his office upon them—he circumcises their hearts. This St. Paul calls "the circumcision made without hands." Col. 2. 11. Outward circumcision was a painful operation to the flesh. By it was signified, the cutting off all carnal hope and legal confidence in the flesh; and was a sign and seal of new-covenant-blessings by Jesus. The circumcision of the heart brings the experience and enjoyment of spiritual blessings to the soul.

When the callousness and hardness of the heart is cut off, then it gladly hears and receives the love of God in the crucified Saviour. This love, known and believed, begets love to God in a circumcised heart. And though there is all comfort in love, yet there is a painful sensation attends loving souls. This is the fruit and evidence of love. They mourn and grieve at the view of the sins and corruptions of their natures—they are pained at the sight of them—grone under a sense of them—are filled with shame for them—and detestation against them. O how do they strive against them, and cry to Jesus for victory over them! To "love the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul," this is their one desire on earth; that they may be in love, wholly devoted to him who bought them with his blood. Of all such souls the Spirit of inspiration declares, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who s' like unto thee, O people, saved of the Lord!" Deut. 33. 29.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.

Heb. 10. 12.

Though the cross of Christ is the christian's glory, yet the small share that Jesus hath in the christian's affections is his shame. Really disciples of Jesus do not love their Saviour as they ought, because they are slow of heart to believe his love to them, and his sufferings for them. How little are our hearts in meditation upon the labour of love, toils of sorrow, and agonies of soul, which Jesus sustained on our account, in our nature. If a friendly arm is reached forth and snatcheth a poor mortal from the jaws of approaching death, O how does it call forth love to his kind deliverer! when he reflects on his danger how does it excite his gratitude! he cannot think of his preserver but he remembers his mercy. But where is our warm affection, our fervent love to that precious MAN whose heart was as a flame of love to us, and who offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins? how was he straitned till this baptism was accomplished? his soul longed till it was finished. But alas! we think too little of our danger—we are too apt to look upon sin as a matter of small moment; because the sacrifice of Jesus is not so constantly upon our hearts. Disciple, dost thou not see cause of mourning for this? hast thou not cause to pray daily for more heart-affecting views of Jesus by the Spirit? O the infinite merit of this one sacrifice! Sin, how malignant its nature! how deep its stain! which nothing but blood divine could atone for.

Behold the Man! gaze, wonder, adore, and love, Jesus on the cross, Jesus at the right hand of glory, first fully atoning for sin, then pleading the sinners cause, and presenting the perfection of his sacrifice. What singular consolation is this! a sense of sin is distressing to the converted soul; but when the one sacrifice is beheld by the eye of faith, how does it revive the drooping heart, give peace to the troubled conscience, and excite joy in the sorrowful mind? Poor sinners have nothing else to look to for hope. Nor can pardon and peace be had from any other object but the atoning blood of Jesus; of this we can never glory too much; nor can our confidence be too strong, nor our expectations too great, nor our triumphs in Jesus over sin, satan, and death or at any time unseasonable; for this precious truth is a never failing spring of consolation, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." 1 John 1. 7.

Our faith adores thy bleeding love,
And trusts for life in one that dy'd;

We hope for heav'nly crowns above
From a Redeemer crucify'd.

And lo, an horror of great darkness fell on him.

Gen. 15. 12.

There is somewhat very gloomy and awful in what is called "a total eclipse of the sun." When the earth is darkened, creation puts on a melancholy aspect, and seems to mourn in silent sadness. But the surprise and astonishment which naturally seize on us, is greatly abated, as these are not uncommon appearances in nature, and are foretold and accounted for. As in the natural, so it is in the spiritual world. The children of God in all ages have experienced darkness of soul: therefore none should think this peculiar, when they are exercised thus, "as though some strange thing had happened to them." 1 Pet. 4. 12. We see Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, under an eclipse of the bright shining of the Sun of righteousness. The consequence of this darkness was an horror, yea an horror of great darkness fell on him. And this too after an extraordinary appearance of the Lord himself to him, who called him by his name, bid him **FEAR NOT**—assures him, **I AM THY SHIELD AND THY EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD**; then gives him the comfortable promise of the seed that should spring from him. Upon which, Abraham "believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness;" and he offers a sacrifice as the Lord commanded. But, alas, how soon did his bright Sun of comfort disappear? how soon did darkness and horror fall upon him? How changeable are our frames? Extraordinary manifestations of comfort and joy are often succeeded by darkness and trials of soul! So it was with our dear Saviour, after the Father's declaration, "This is my beloved Son." After the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, he was led into the wilderness, to undergo the most sharp and trying temptations. Thus again St. Paul, after he had been caught up to the third heavens, a messenger of satan was sent to buffet him.

Hence, O believer, under spiritual darkness and distress of soul, write not bitter things against thyself—think not God ceaseth to love thee, and visits in wrath. No: God ever rests in his love—he changes not—his love is the same. Thou art as safe in his hands, in the dark, though not so comfortable as in the light. Now the Lord teaches his sovereignty—instructs in humility—excites patience—shews thee thy nothingness—cuts off all glorying in thyself—strengthens thy trust in him—draws out thy hope from thyself towards him—and shews thee that all the promises center in Jesus, and shall be fulfilled in God's own way and manner, to the praise of the glory of his own grace. "He that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness." John 8, 12.

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor. 12. 3.

"As the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth his handy work," so every page of his sacred word proclaims his grace to his people, reminds them of the insufficiency of their natural power and free-will to any saving purposes. Formal professors say, That Jesus is the Lord. The confession is easy and common to the open profane, and the more decent Pharisee; and is alike profitable to salvation, with the true declaration from saian, "Thou art the Holy One of God," Mark 1. 24. But saving confession of Jesus, with the lips, proceeds from inward believing on Jesus with the heart; and this from spiritual discoveries to the mind by the Holy Ghost. O believer, know thy distinguishing blessings! esteem it not a common privilege, but special grace, that thou canst see, canst own, canst come to, trust in, call upon the despised Nazarene, the once sin-bearing, sin-atonement, curse-sustaining Jesus, as thy Lord and thy God; in whom is all thy hope, and from whom is all thy salvation.

Hear what thy Master proclaims of such a confession; "blessed art thou; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 16. 17. This is the mystery of the Father's kingdom: it is given only to children to know it. Therefore the Holy Ghost is sent into their hearts to make it manifest. Most blessed confession! May it be ever uppermost in our minds, in our lips, and evidenced by our lives!

Jesus is the Lord, the Saviour, the man and Mediator—our atonement on the cross—our righteousness in his life—our intercessor at the right hand of glory. This, this our plea to all that are against us; and we are sure it is a godly righteous plea, for it is given us by the Holy Ghost, in the word of truth. By it the Father is glorified—Jesus is honoured—drooping, fainting hearts are revived and comforted—faith is strengthened—hope confirmed—love increased—holiness advanced—satan vanquished—sin subdued—the law answered—the world overcome—death conquered—and we share in the triumphs of glory and immortality.

Christian soul, cheer up; with this truth in thine heart with this confession in thy mouth; go on thy way rejoicing; nor men nor devils can harm thee. Thy Lord is almighty to protect, ever-loving to save. Only fear to offend against love itself. Never suffer a doubt of Jesus' love in thy mind. Grieve not the holy Spirit. Come, a few more days to prove thy allegiance to Jesus on earth, and thou shalt reign with him in glory. Ever remember thy Lord's blessed promise, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10. 32.

Jesus said, will ye also go away? John 6. 67.

This, O soul, is the voice of thy Beloved. Thy Friend put this question to his own disciples. Our Master keeps no prest men in his service. All his subjects are volunteers. They are made willing to come to him, believe on him, and greatly esteem the day of his power to follow and cleave to him. Force, restraint, and compulsion act not on their ingenuous minds: But what they find in Jesus now, present peace; what they expect from Jesus hereafter, glory and salvation, endears him to their souls.

Daily observation furnishes with instances of many who profess to own Christ, and to follow him for a season; but anon, through not understanding his doctrine, and not knowing his love, they are offended, forsake Christ, his truth and his ways; go back to the world, to the enjoyment of their lusts, and to carnal preachers, who cry, peace, peace unto them. Thus they make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, which they professed to have.

But a true disciple of Jesus, who has known Christ in spirit and truth, our Saviour keeps from such folly. And the sight of others falling off and leaving him, is made of blessed use to such. It excites humility and gratitude—quickens to holy jealousy and godly watchfulness. And such a tender expostulation put to the soul, "Wilt thou also go away?" O how it kindles a spark of fire, and blows up a flame of love in the poor sinner's heart! As when the tender and indulgent parent says to his dear little child, Wilt thou go away and leave me? How does it draw forth the love and affection of its heart? and the little thing, with eager embraces, clings the faster to its parent.

When the aged Polycarp was joyfully going to seal the truth of his faith with his blood, being threatened by the pro-consul with death in various shapes, answered, 'Why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt; we christians are fixed in our minds not to change from good to evil.' Then the pro-consul flattered him, and promised to set him at liberty, if he would reproach Christ. (O the affecting reply! how ingenuous! how full of love!) 'Eighty and six years (said he) have I now served my Lord Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong: How then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?' How victorious is faith! how powerful is love! Lord, increase our faith in thee! Jesus inflame our affections to thee! "To whom should we go, thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6. 68.

Draw us, O God, with sov'reign grace, That we may end this mortal race,
And lift our thoughts on high, And see salvation nigh.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

A poor sinner, in a dangerous illness, was in a very dark and comfortless frame of mind for two days; but on the third day, light, peace and joy overspread his soul by these words being brought to his mind: "After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." On this, he called for a bible. O how was his inexpressible joy increased, when he read the words in Hosea, 6. 2. On being asked, If he had done with the bible? he answered, with a flood of joyful tears, 'No: never, never shall I have done with that blessed book, till I change time for eternity.' The Spirit of inspiration ever honours his own word of truth. All peace, comfort and joy is derived from it through faith. We shall suffer no loss, if we suspend judgment on comforts, till we have tried them by this touchstone of truth. We should be on our guard against the flatteries of false peace, and the delusions of unscriptural joys.

Revealed truths are faith's objects. By the knowledge of them, the Spirit consoles the soul, lovingly reproves and corrects what is amiss—profitably instructs in the fundamental truths of Jesus' righteousness unto justification of life—and the believer's obedience unto righteousness. No one doctrine of God's word should be slightly regarded. In this sense he that neglects one point of truth, is guilty of all. This is to impeach the wisdom of the Spirit, as though he had made known needless and insignificant doctrines. This is (instead of being doers of the word) to judge and condemn the word. Jesus is the sum and substance of the scriptures. All the promises are in him. All the doctrines lead to him, and centre in him. These are the furniture of faith, while Jesus is the chief object of the soul. So disciples go on to perfection in knowledge, love and holiness; therefore they should prize the word as their companion—consult it as their familiar friend—and pray over it as their constant guide. So like those of old, they shall be "edified, and walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Acts 9. 31.

Laden with guilt and full of fears,
I fly to thee, my Lord,
And not a glimpse of hope appears,
But in thy written word.

The volume of my Father's grace
Does all my grief assuage;
Here I behold my Saviour's face
Almost in ev'ry page.

We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are ; yet without sin. Heb. 4. 15.

“Without sin !” O cries the sanctified soul, that this was my happy state. And verily, as sure as the word of God is true, thou shalt enjoy this perfect freedom from thy worst enemy. But thou must be content to wait God’s time, and live in God’s way ; that is, by faith upon thy best friend Jesus. Thy present blessedness is to understand and rejoice in this great mystery, that Christ who knew no sin, was made sin for us. Therefore, by faith we glory, knowing that God blesteth us as righteous in Christ, and doth not impute sin unto us. As the head is without sin, so are the members, viewed and beloved in the sight of God. And this is the evidence that we are born of the Spirit and have the mind of Christ, that we hate all sin, and long for entire deliverance from it, and aspire after full conformity to the image of God.

This we cannot enjoy in the body ; therefore we must first sleep in Jesus, ere we awake up after his perfect likeness. But in the mean time we have a blessed sympathizing High-Priest before the throne of God. This is our comfort. That very human nature in which our sins were expiated on earth, is now crowned with glory in heaven. This is very refreshing. Christ can as soon forget his own glory, as any part of his suffering body. He feels for them. He is touched with the most tender concern and affection towards them. He knows what sore temptations mean, for he hath felt the same. Temptations, even though most violent, cannot harm us : nay, they do not defile us, unless we enter into them. Therefore, they should not deject us. And need we ever be overcome by them ? Doth not Jesus live ? Have we not free and familiar access to him, as the glorified man and mediator ? Is not all power in heaven and earth given unto him ? Believest thou this, O soul ? Think on Calvary’s proof of his love. Remember Bethany’s proof of his resurrection. He ever lives at the right-hand of glory to interceed for and save poor sinners. And let thy case be what it may, the advice of his loving heart suits it : “Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” Psalm 50. 15.

With joy we meditate the grace
Of our high-priest above ;
His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love.

He in the days of feeble flesh
Pour’d out his cries and tears,

And in his measure feels afresh
What ev’ry member bears.

Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and his pow’r ;
We shall obtain deliver’ing grace
In the distressing hour.

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

1 Tim. 3. 9.

From a seeming zeal and regard to the ark of God, when it shook, and as he thought was in danger of falling, Uzzah put forth his hand to save it. It seems a very rational act; but as it argued distrust of God's power to preserve what was for his own glory and honour, therefore the Lord highly resented it.

If the displeasure of Jehovah is thus displayed in regard to the type of the covenant, how jealous is the Lord of hosts of his own glory, contained in the truths of the everlasting covenant, laid up in the sacred ark Jesus, for all his people. If a trembling ark, touched by an officious hand, was death, one should fear and tremble to attack the revealed truths of God's everlasting love to his people, power to preserve them, and grace to enable them to persevere in the faith unto eternal glory.

Human efforts often spring from unbelieving hearts. The hand of nature is often stretched forth to assist, when it only counteracts divine purposes. Carnal reason ever opposeth the mystery of the gospel; but faith is supported by God's truths, the conscience is purified by Jesus' blood, and the mystery of faith is only known to enlightened minds. To hold by it, and to hold it fast in the conscience, is the life and joy of our souls. So the Holy Spirit maintains vital living union between Jesus and his members. So love is excited to him, a life of dependence on him, a throne of grace is delightful to them, sin becomes more hateful in their sight, and the fruits of righteousness are increased to God's glory, by those who, though guilty sinners in themselves, are in Christ pure and free from all sin—unrighteous in themselves, but in Jesus clothed with perfect righteousness—filthy and polluted by nature and practice, but in Jesus, all fair without spot, beautiful and comely. In themselves, no right to God's love, no title to his inheritance; but in Jesus their right is clear, their title legal, their enjoyment of it certain. Here is the mystery of faith. Thus, disciple, fix thy steady eye on Jesus—daily view the promises in him—look thou constantly for the Spirit's power through him. So shalt thou have “the answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus.” 1 Pet. 3. 21. “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.” Psalm 119. 117.

Why does your face, ye humble souls,
Those mournful colours wear?
What doubts are these that waste your
faith,
And nourish your despair?

Awake, our hearts, adore the grace
That buries all our faults,
And pard'ning blood, that swells above
Our follies and our thoughts.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

2 Theff. 2. 16, 17.

Believers in Jesus know that "the remembrance of sin is grievous, and the burden intolerable." A sight and sense of sin affects their conscience with sorrow and distress. There is daily need that their poor hearts should be comforted; and also that they should be established in every good word and work. But from whence shall they derive this? from striving to forget, palliate, or excuse their past sins, by promising to be more steadfast for the future in the truths of God, and obedience to his will? Alas, he that truly knows what sin is, he who is really acquainted with his own weakness and insufficiency to that which is good, and proneness to all evil, will not, cannot thus deceive his own soul. But the converted soul will ingenuously confess his sins to his God and Saviour—lay them open with all their aggravating circumstances—mourn over them with a godly sorrow—own his just deserts for them—and in the exercise of faith, look "to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." The disciple knows that soul-reviving truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." When Jesus is the object of his faith, the soul is also possessed of a good hope. These are inseparable. The regenerate soul believes the truth as it is in Jesus; then hope is drawn out after the blessing and comfort of it. In this way, disciple of Jesus, thou canst never believe nor hope too much. Nay, is it not thy distress and heaviness that thy faith is weak, thy hope languid, and thy love so cold? but why is this? Not for want of a foundation for faith and hope; for "our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, hath loved us." Who? only the prophets, apostles, holy men of old, righteous persons? Nay, but sinners of mankind, such was the character of all those whom the apostle includes in the pronoun *us*. And as the consequence of this love "he hath given *us* everlasting consolation." Not the effect of time; not subject to mutability; but solid, perpetual, and eternal. Founded in the everlasting covenant—established in everlasting righteousness—issuing in everlasting salvation—revealed in the everlasting gospel—and applied to the soul by the everlasting Spirit. Consolation and comfort of heart is inseparable from a stability in the good word of the Lord and in works of righteousness and true holiness; "to the praise of the glory of his own grace." Eph. 1. 6.

This is the true God and eternal life. Keep yourselves from idols. Amen. 1 John 5. 20, 21.

It is the common objection, with the men of this world, against the ministers and members of Jesus: "You can preach and talk of nothing but Jesus." Truly we "consider him as the end of all our conversation." Heb. 13. 8. Conscious of what he hath done FOR us—what he is TO us—and what he hath done IN us; verily, Jesus is all in all to our souls. We know that the Son of God is come in our flesh. We are sure, that by the blood of his cross "he hath made an end of sin, finished transgression, made reconciliation for iniquity"; and by his holy life "hath brought in an everlasting righteousness." Dan. 9. 24. All this we poor sinners wanted. Nothing short of this could save us. But this eternal life we have in our WONDERFUL Friend, the God-man Christ Jesus. Blessed be his infinitely precious name! he hath given us an understanding heart to know him. We desire to be eternally indebted to his name, his grace, his love; for we see our union to him, and oneness with him. Marvel not then, that we speak so highly of OUR BELOVED; "for if we should hold our peace, the very stones in the street would cry out against us." Say, ye first-born sons of light; say, ye children of grace, of whom should we glory, if not of Jesus our true God and eternal life? We disclaim all other gods. "We know and believe that the Father is in him, and he in the Father." John 10. 38. He teacheth us the Father's love in him to us; and he sends the Comforter, which proceedeth from the Father, to shed his love abroad in our hearts.

Alas! how did we live before we knew Jesus, the only true God? Truly, though we talked of God and thought we knew God, and worshipped him, and feared him, yet we were all the while, like the rest of the whole world, "lying in wickedness;" fast asleep in the arms of the wicked one; for when we were without Christ, we were Atheists, "without God in the world; and consequently had no hope." Eph. 3. 12. How deluded are the wise and learned of this world, with their notions and worship of the unknown God, while little children are truly wise and best learned who know Jesus as their Lord and their God, and abide in him. The truth of their faith, the uprightness of their hearts, and the sincerity of their love, are best evidenced by keeping themselves from the ensnaring vanities and bewitching idols of time and sense.

Jesus my God, I know his name,

His name is all my trust;

Nor will he put my soul to shame;

Nor let my hope be lost.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Rom. 7. 24.

Spiritual sense and feeling are peculiar to regenerate heaven-born souls. While in a carnal state, "dead in trespasses and sins;" though the law thunders out its dreadful curses against us, we hear not. Though by nature children of wrath, and deserving hell, yet our danger we see not. Though our sins are gone over our heads, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for us to bear, yet we feel them not. But when the soul is alive to God, we groan, being burdened with a body of sin, and pant after deliverance. This was the experience of holy Paul. Such the experience of the saints in all ages. But, thanks be to our God, though ever so deeply distressed and depressed with sin, we sorrow not as without hope, we are not ignorant of our Deliverer, but know that it is through Jesus Christ. None but Jesus is able; and he hath, he doth, he will deliver. He hath delivered from the curse of sin by his death. He doth deliver the conscience from the guilt and dominion of sin through faith. He will deliver the soul perfectly from the being of sin, when the body of flesh is "sown in dishonour, to be raised in glory." The last enemy, death, is not destroyed yet: so none are perfectly exempt from that which brought death into the world, SIN. But present deliverance thou hast, O believer! and perfect deliverance thou canst not but pant after and long for.

Think not, that feeling a body of sin (which, like thy natural body, consists of many parts and members) groaning under it, inwardly breathing out ardent desires for deliverance, inscribing, "wretched man" upon thyself, like a criminal who is compelled to carry about a dead, putrified, stinking carcase; think not all this to be inconsistent with a blessed state and being blessed "with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." No: thou art not singular; it was once the lot of all thy brethren now perfect in glory. It is the lot of all thy companions in the faith and patience of Jesus on earth. When Paul in such spiritual ecstasy and joy, was caught up to the third heavens, he did not know whether he was in the body; he might then think, he was intirely freed from his burden, that he was perfect: but a little time after, experience convinced him to the contrary: and we find him "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." 2 Cor. 6. 10.

Blessed be our compassionate Saviour, who reaches out reviving cordials of consolation and refreshment. This cheers our drooping Spirits under our burden. This favour no kind hand administered to him, when worn out and sinking under the ponderous load of our sins on the cross. O the joy of faith! Sin, though felt, grieved for, mourned over; yet, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8. 1.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
 Psalm 55. 22.

The soul, having lost its innocency by the sin of the first Adam, can never be happy till it knows righteousness is restored to it again by the second Adam Jesus. Sensible sinners would be truly miserable, when they see their nakedness, and feel their want of righteousness, was not righteousness revealed as God's unspeakable gift by Jesus Christ. By him a glorious robe of righteousness is wrought out and imputed to naked and destitute sinners. Grace reigns through his righteousness. All the mercy and favour we receive from God, is in a way of righteousness. We enjoy the knowledge and comfort, that we are righteous before God through faith. If this point is not clear and settled in the mind, it is because the clouds of ignorance and unbelief are not chased away; the Sun of righteousness hath not yet arose upon such hearts: therefore they are perplexed and distressed touching the hope of salvation. For this is the essential and leading point in christianity. Infinite are the blessings, most precious the promises, which abound in God's word to the righteous. When we read of the righteous in scripture, we are ever to remember Jesus, and give glory to him, from whom our righteousness cometh. This we shall do, if the Spirit has revealed his righteousness to our hearts by faith. God "will never suffer the righteous to be moved from their hope." Then also there is a holy boldness and sweet familiarity between a righteous Lord and such righteous souls. As he has clothed them with the garments of salvation, they have always a sympathizing friend in their hours of trouble to flee to. Jesus will support their weak souls, and sustain their heavy burdens. They cannot sink, though they may be often ready to faint. But why is this? Truly we are apt to struggle with this difficulty, and toil with the other load upon our poor minds, instead of casting all upon Jesus who careth for us. Sense opposeth faith; hence Jesus is forgotten, and the mind remains troubled. But here is the wisdom and glory of faith; whenever we feel our souls are bowed down on any account, to refer all our griefs, and cast, or roll all our burdens off from our own minds upon Jesus, and simply to cry out with Hezekiah, "I am oppressed, undertake for me."

But I, with all my cares,

Will lean upon the Lord;

I'll cast my burdens on his arm,

And rest upon his word.

His arm shall well sustain

The children of his love;

The ground on which their safety stands

No earthly pow'r can move.

I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3. 14.

By effectual vocation the soul is called from a death in sin to a life of righteousness. By spiritual illumination, the most desirable objects are discerned. The faith of God's elect manifests itself to be an operative grace in the heart by the conduct of the life. Blessed Paul, though such a zealous champion for sovereign operations and free-grace truths, though so averse to the pride of free-will and the confidence of human righteousness in his writing and preaching, yet his life and exhortations are equally opposite to all licentious practices, unchristian sloth and indolence. He had a race to run, a prize to win, the end of his calling to attain. Thus is it with all who are partakers of like precious faith. Folding the hands, sitting down contented, resting in ease and indolence, may suffice when doctrines are only received in the head, assented to in the judgment as dry speculations, so as to engage the tongue, without warming and influencing the heart, and producing the fruits of holiness in the life. If sitting still and talking, or walking contrary to the hope of the gospel, is to imitate the apostle's blessed conduct, followers of him abound greatly.

But the truth received in the love of it, excites to diligence and activity. "I press forwards," like a racer who considers the mark before him, and turns his back upon the place he sets out from; and is solicitous so to run that he may obtain the prize. Jesus is the christian's mark. As he considers this, he presses forward towards him. The world, with all its sinful customs, vain pleasures, and carnal delights, he forsakes and leaves behind him. He fears being entangled with the objects of time and sense; preferring Jesus above all. These things grow more and more mean and contemptible to him. The more he sees all in Jesus, and expects all from him, so much the more he presses towards him. Hence means of grace are prized—ordinances attended to—the word is precious—the prize is glorious. Thou man of God, ever exercise a godly jealousy of being brought into bondage to the world or the flesh. Remember how unloving, how dishonourable thou artest when any object engages thy attention in competition with thy Saviour, and the glory which thou art called to by him. "So run that you may obtain."

How vain are all things here below!

How false and yet how fair!

Each pleasure hath its poison too,

And ev'ry sweet a snare.

Dear Saviour, let thy beauties be

My soul's eternal food;

And grace command my heart away

From all created good.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2. 15.

The voice of carnal reason cries, God hath created passions within us, therefore gratify them. At this bar inconsistency is pronounced upon scripture. But the voice of inspiration proclaims, "The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father;" therefore teaches, crucify them. Let no disciple of Jesus think this a hard saying. Nay, but the soul can find no happiness but in the love of God. If these objects attract the affections, so that we seek our happiness in and comfort from them, as they stand in competition with, so they will keep us from the sense of the love of God. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be. When the love of God lives in the heart, the love of the world dies: So if the love of the world gains an ascendancy in the affections, the love of the Father subsides. We can no more love two such contrary objects with a supreme love, than we can exist in time and eternity, in heaven and on earth at the same time: One will necessarily give place to the other in experience and enjoyment. The carnal gratifications of the flesh, the vain indulgences of pleasing the sight, whatever promotes the pride of nature; the riches, pleasures, honours of this perishing world, are all contrary to the love of God in the heart, which is the essence of all true holiness and real happiness. In the sight of God, saints see them as warring against the soul. Alas, awful instances we see of many professors being bewitched and ensnared by the enchanting allurements of the world, to forsake Jesus and the hope of the gospel. Melancholy complaint of St. Paul, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4. 10. Saints are delivered from this evil world; they are redeemed from a vain conversation by Jesus, and forbid by his Spirit to be conformed to the world. The men of this world are declared enemies to God's children. It is our wisdom ever to be on our guard against them. Though it is our duty to behave with all kindness and courtesy, to do them all the good in our power; yet let us beware that they do us no harm. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and not be burnt?" Prov. 6. 27. Close intimacy with carnal friends exposes to danger. Alluring smiles from them often wound deep, where open opposition could do no harm.

The brightest things below the sky
Give but a flatt'ring light;
We should suspect some danger nigh,
Where we possess delight.

Our dearest joys and nearest friends,
The partners of our blood,
How they divide our warring minds,
And leave but half for God!

In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee: The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. Isa. 26. 8.

Herein appears the wisdom and glory of our Lord. He hath ordained the way wherein his people should walk, as well as the end which they shall surely enjoy, salvation. Thus also is it manifest, by perseverance in grace and holiness, that any poor sinner is effectually called to the knowledge of Jesus and salvation by him.

Though in regeneration the carnality and corruption of our nature is not destroyed; yet by the word and Spirit the soul is possessed with a desire after Jesus, and the sweet remembrance of his name is fixt in the heart. Hence many souls, who are dear to the Lamb, though not favoured with rapture and ecstasy of joy, yet he is all their desire, and all their salvation. They know and feel themselves to be poor and lost. They are humbled in soul. Hope from every object but Christ is cut off. But yet they cannot speak of such manifestations of joy and tokens of comfort, which others tell of. Hence they distress and disquiet their minds, are ready to question whether they have any knowledge, love and fear of the Lord. But this is not right. For it is plain and evident, where there is a desire of soul to the name of Jesus, and a remembrance in the heart of him, this ariseth from a degree of knowledge and faith; and love also in proportion is drawn out after precious Christ. Such will be found waiting upon the Lord.

There is something in the name of Jesus that is attracting—that in the nature of his work and salvation which suits them, and which they love to hear of and wait for. The secret power of the Spirit inclines the heart in the way of God's judgments—in the ordinances of his house—in private duties—secret meditation and reading, &c. Yea, though in distress and affliction, still they wait upon, yea wait for the Lord for more knowledge, stronger faith, greater love. Therefore such who lightly esteem, yea speak contemptibly of such good desires, speak unadvisedly with their lips; they "make sad the heart of the righteous, whom the Lord would not have made sad." Jesus doth not despise "the day of small things." He loves the weakest lamb in his flock—he delights in the smallest work of his own Spirit—he doth not despise the least desire of the soul towards him—his loving heart will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until he sends forth judgment unto victory."

God is mine all-sufficient good,
My portion and my choice;

In him my vast desires are fill'd,
And all my pow'rs rejoice.

I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts : According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you : Fear ye not. Haggai 2. 4, 5.

When the Lord calls his people to great work, or grievous sufferings, he animates them with strong consolations. For as their day is, their strength shall be. This passage shines bright, as it manifesteth the most comforting views, and clearest discoveries, of covenant grace and love to saints of old engaged in a very arduous work of Jehovah. "Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we might have hope." Rom. 15. 4. And our hope is established and strengthened through patience and comfort of the scriptures. And as they encourage our hope, they also forbid our fears; as if salvation was precarious and uncertain—as though the matter of hope rested upon the conditions we are able to fulfil to secure it. Blessed be God, faith hath a surer anchorhold, even the word, the covenant, the oath of Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit. The knowledge of this, under all the discouraging views of nature and sense, lifts the believer above himself, and makes him triumph in the everlasting, unchangeable love and sovereign grace of the glorious Trinity. So children of God, in every age, feed upon one and the same bread of life Jesus. He is the Logos, the Word, with whom the Father covenanted for sinners. According to this, the love of the Father is towards us, even while we are in our natural state, in Egyptian bondage. Yea the love of the Lord of hosts is the cause of our deliverance from it, and conversion to his blessed Self: So also, his Spirit remaineth with us: by his sweet agency and power our blind eyes are enlightened to see the glory and suitableness of Jesus—our deaf ears opened to hear the loving voice of this dear Charmer—and an understanding heart is given us to disclaim any other hope—and to know and choose Jesus, believe in and love him as our only precious Saviour. What blessed confidence is this! We are exhorted to "hold it fast." "Fear ye not, saith the Lord, I am ever with you." Fear and distrust is most unreasonable. Pride and self-glorying is most abominable. Sin and disobedience most hateful. Only love, humility and gratitude most powerfully operate upon such highly-favoured hearts. Hence are excited the most generous expressions from their lips, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Psalm 116. 8, 12.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Rom. 8. 16.

These words dropt not from the pen of a saint in a state of sinless perfection. Nor is this invaluable privilege, this heavenly blessing, peculiar to the experience of Paul the apostle; but to Paul, less than "the least of all saints, and chief of sinners;" (as he confesseth himself to be) and also it hath been enjoyed by poor sinners, through faith in Jesus, in all ages: it is the common privilege of all christians. We may well cry out in astonishment with Solomon, "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." 2 Chron. 6. 18. Amazing condescension! "Lord, what is man (sinful, hell-deserving man) that thou shouldest thus visit him" with thy comforting presence! Delightful to think of. There is a sweet relation which subsists between the High and Lofty One and wretched miserable sinners. In Jesus they both unite. The fulness of the Godhead and the misery and curse of the manhood state of his people meet in him. From the head the Spirit proceeds; and, like the oil on Aaron's head, descends to the members. To their spirits he bears witness, agreeable to the word of truth, of their covenant-relation as children, adopted sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Let no believing soul be distressed or deluded by the deceiving of others, so as to expect a vision, manifestation, or revelation that may be seen, heard, or felt by the outward senses. No; the Spirit bears witness to our spirits, not to our senses. Even as the law bears witness to the conscience that we are sinners, and works wrath there; so the blessed Spirit bears an inward witness to the mind, that we are the righteous children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus—that "he died for our sins and rose again for our justification—that in him we are chosen, beloved, accepted, justified, pardoned, and shall be glorified with him. Thus saith Jesus, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John 16. 14.

See, O believer, the riches of covenant-grace! Admire and adore the wonderful love of the Trinity! Hast thou received the witness of the Spirit, through the faith of Christ? Happy, highly favoured art thou among men. Or art thou waiting and longing for the promise of the Father? It is sure: not because of any good thing naturally found in thee, but because Jesus interceeds before the throne. Therefore thou mayest pray in the assurance of faith having this promise to all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, "Your heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Luke 11. 13.

And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God.
 Lev. 26. 44.

Can any child of God read the awful threatnings of a jealous, holy, sin-avenging God, contained in this chapter, and think light of sin? Can he count it a small thing to walk contrary to the revealed mind and will of God? Indeed one would think it impossible. Nor can we hardly believe any one, who has known the true grace of God, could read this verse and ever dare to open his mouth, and shoot the arrows of bitter words against the doctrine of everlasting electing love, sovereign grace, and the certain salvation of every redeemed soul. But alas, when the mouth of proud man is not held in by the bridle of humility, what awful, what horrid speeches will he dare to utter, even against the plain and express declarations of Jehovah himself?

The rank weeds of natural notions are offensive unto gracious souls. While pride, unbelief and corrupt reason, mutually strengthen each other in carnal hearts, in enmity and opposition to free-grace truths. What is a bone of contention to such, is godly, wholsom and comfortable food to self-emptied and humble souls, by the faith of Jesus. To every self-abased soul, who has no hope but in the word of the Lord, no confidence but in the covenant of Jesus, who is the Mediator Jehovah; the Lord our God speaks thus comfortably. Though in the land, yea as thou often fearest, in the hand and under the power of thine enemy, (O hear and rejoice!) thy Lord saith, "I will not cast away, abhor, utterly destroy." Though thou hast broken thy covenant, yet God will not break his. It is firm as the mountains, unshaken as the rocks. God will visit for sin, chastise for provocations, correct for backslidings. All this is covenant-love; but to cast away his children he will not, to abhor them he cannot, to destroy and punish them in hell is contrary to his truth, his justice, his promise, his oath, his covenant, established in love, and ratified by blood, the blood of Jesus, his Son, our Saviour. What tongue saith, Is it so? come on then, let us sin with an high hand? Poor soul, thy speech bewrayeth thee. The sound of grace has only reached thine ear; but where it is known and felt in the heart, it speaks otherwise. God's open, free, loving declarations, attract, melt and soften it into love and obedience.

The promise of my Father's love

Shall stand for ever good:

He said, and gave his soul to death,

And seal'd the grace with blood,

To this dear cov'nant of thy word

I set my worthless name;

I seal th' engagement to my Lord,

And make my humble claim.

They shall put you out of the synagogues. John 16. 2.

So it must be in all ages. The scriptures cannot be broken. But what are the crimes of the ministers of Jesus, to deserve such usage? Is it for a life of intemperance and lewdness, of sin and folly in frequenting play-houses, card-tables, routs, assemblies, horse-racing, &c? No; friends of the Lamb have done with all such vain, paltry matter. Their hearts feed upon infinitely higher delights; and their time is too precious to be devoted to sacrifice upon the altars of heathenish vanities. Otherwise for these things they might gain no censure, but might keep their places in the synagogues, and their characters in the world as good honest orthodox preachers, and stand free from the charge of popish dreaming enthusiasts; the whole sanhedrim, chief priests and elders being judges.

But they stand arraigned of crimes of the highest nature; even of inverting the very order of things, "turning the world upside down," Acts 17. 6. "preaching one Jesus, who was hanged upon a tree," Acts 10. 39. as the sinner's only hope and salvation. That thus glory is given to God in the highest, peace upon earth, and good will to men is proclaimed—that the whole of salvation is of the free-grace and unmerited love of God." From this charge faithful ministers of Christ will not desire to be acquitted. Love to their precious Master—to his blessed truth—to his dear people, inspires them with boldness. It is the highest honour, the greatest glory Jesus puts upon them, when they are called to suffer for this. "Yea, saith our Lord, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think he doth God service." Zeal for God is a pretence for persecution. But what is our Lord's reason? "These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me." But he observed, that on hearing these things sorrow filled his disciples hearts. Sympathizing Lord! he instantly gives them a promise—of what? power to call down fire from heaven to destroy their adversaries? No, quite the reverse: but of a blessed inward Comforter, THE DOVE. He was to teach them to act with meekness, and in patience to possess their souls. See the Spirit's influence in the conduct of Peter and John, Acts 4. and yet their courage and constancy in the cause of their dear Master. Their very enemies, who commanded them not to preach in the name of Jesus, saw their boldness with wonder, and were silenced with their reasoning. Admire and imitate, O ye suffering servants of a once suffering Lord, "How forcible are right words!" Job 6. 25. How prevailing is a meek spirit! Peter and John said unto them, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." ver. 19. "And the apostles departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 5. 41.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Mark 8. 36, 37.

Hast thou heard the voice of thy Beloved? and art thou a willing disciple of a despised Master? But does the flesh shrink from, murmur and reason against taking up the cross daily, giving up all, "and suffering the loss of all things?" Listen, O soul, to the reasonings of Wisdom. Though the followers of the Lamb are counted fools and madmen, without understanding; yet their dear Master here teaches them such reasoning and argument, drawn from the nature and fitness of things, as will, in a dying hour and at the judgment-day, silence the tongue of every adversary. Ever use thy Master's weapon. Reason daily, O christian, upon thy spiritual gain by the knowledge of Jesus. Study to look with contempt upon thy trifling, carnal loss. What is all the wisdom of this world but folly? the righteousness of the whole world but filthy rags? the hopes of a fallen world but miserable delusion? the pleasures of a gay world but vanity? the riches of the world but deceitfulness? the honours of the world but an empty sound? All these, though possessed and enjoyed, cannot profit the soul.

Nay, rather like Job's friends, they often only prove miserable comforters, distress the mind, but can never console the heart. Though often set by the enemy before our own eyes, in the most conspicuous view and advantageous light, as satan tempted our Lord; yet is there any comparison between an eternal gain and a temporal loss? Verily, one moment's communion with Jesus by faith, infinitely transcends a whole life of threescore years and ten, spent in all the glory and happiness the whole world can yield.

What then can be placed in competition with an "exceeding and an eternal weight of glory?" How great is the worth of the soul! it is immortal. How rich the love of God! it is everlasting. How transcendent the love of Jesus! it passeth knowledge. How amazing the grace of the Holy Ghost! it proceeds from both. It is through his power any poor sinner is able to say: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. 3. 7, 8, 9.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory dy'd,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all beside.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Gal. 6. 14.

Satan is very busy to hinder the christian's glorying in Jesus only. As an adversary to the truth, he objects, by the men of the world, and it is frequently suggested to the believer's mind, "Jesus is ever uppermost in your heart and tongue; you ascribe no glory to God the Father, and to the holy Spirit." But this is vain and ignorant. For in a crucified Jesus we behold the great love of the Father. Our glorying in the cross of Christ alone, is by the grace and teaching of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to testify of Jesus only, and of salvation by none other; so saith our Lord, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John 16. 14.

God forbid that any man upon earth, or any devil in hell, should corrupt our minds from the simplicity of Christ, or prevent our glorying in the ever dear, the ever lovely Jesus of Nazareth; for he hung on the accursed tree, with all our guilt and sin and shame, in his naked exposed body. Was he not ashamed to own our vile characters, nor to love our sinful persons? and shall we be ashamed to own and confess his innocent person, his glorious name, his gracious words, his cursed death, his perfect salvation? Surely then the very stones in the street would cry out against us. And Jesus says, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and his holy angels." Mark 8. 38.

To expect salvation from no other, and all salvation from this man Jesus, this fellow, this malefactor, as the Jews accounted him, as suffering, dying on a cross, a gibbet, a gallows: This is the very essence of the gospel, the glory of God's grace, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils; but the only hope of a poor humbled sinner, and the triumph of faith.

Who can fully describe the blessedness of Jesus-glorifying souls! As they find and feel new life from his cross, they experience a crucifixion and death to all legal hopes and vain confidence, which a self-righteous world glory in. From the cross of Jesus they view the world with all its pomps and pleasures, riches and honours, glory and happiness, as accursed, sentenced and devoted to destruction. Therefore as crucified persons they die daily to it by the faith of Jesus.

Our faith adores thy bleeding love,
And trusts for life in one that dy'd;
We hope for heavenly crowns above,
From a Redeemer crucified,

Let the vain world pronounce it shame,
And sling their scandals on the cause;
We come to boast our Saviour's name,
And make our triumphs in his cross.

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will bear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God. Zech. 13. 9.

O give me comforts or I die, saith the soul! for surely was I a child of God, I should not be thus tried, afflicted and distressed. Nay, saith the Saviour, "you know not what ye ask." Dost thou forget the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children? "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor saint when thou art rebuked of him." Heb. 12. 5. Did I bid thee believe on me? "Believe also my words: It is through much tribulation thou must enter my kingdom." Acts 14. 22. This profitable lesson, though grievous to the flesh, must be learned. Here, like Peter, we pray to be excused, being washed by the Lord. But we consider not his love, nor our own advantage—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," saith Jesus. If ye are without chastisement, then are ye bastards and not sons." "I WILL bring thee through the fire; I WILL refine thee; I will try thee." Why? Because thou art not reprobate silver, nor counterfeit metal; therefore I will take pains with thee: "I will purge away thy dross and thy sin, and purify thee in the furnace." Verily thy graces shall shine brighter—thy faith grow stronger—thy love burn more fervent—and thy obedience be more chearful. So "I chasten whom I love," saith the Lord.

Nothing can reconcile the soul to afflictive allotments, but looking on them as covenant-dispensations. The loving Father's promise, is the beloved childrens portion. "I will never turn away from them to do them good." Jer. 32. 40. Such is the covenant-love of our covenant God. Here faith fixes its hold, and waits the promised blessing. Though saints desire to be passive, yet they cannot be silent; "for they shall call on my name," even the name above all other names, Jesus the precious Saviour. And, saith the Lord, "I will not only hear, but answer." "It is I, saith Jesus to the terrified disciples, be not afraid." "It is my dear people that call," saith the Lord. As the affectionate mother knows the voice of her own dear child, she listens, she runs to its relief. So the Lord speaks with affection and love, "My people." So souls reply in the appropriation of faith, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!"

Blest is the man thy hands chastise,
And to his duty draw;
Thy scourges make thy childrena wise,
When they forget thy law.

But God will ne'er forsake his saints,
Nor his own promise break;
He pardons his inheritance
For their Redeemer's sake.

And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing ? 2 Kings 8. 13.

O the treachery of the human heart ! both scripture and experience prove this melancholy truth, that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Who can fathom the depths of its deceptions ? who can understand the hidden iniquity which he concealed in the nature of sinful man ? Alas, presumptuous confidence that our nature is not so totally corrupt and abominable, too, too oft deceives and betrays the children of God. No marvel that this wretch Hazael, who had premeditated rebellion and murder in his heart, should yet start at the prediction of such crimes which as yet had no real existence. Doubtless he thought the prophet judged very hard of him. He could almost stare the prophet out of countenance : And, as though he charged him with degrading the dignity of his human nature, he demands whether he looked on him no better than an unclean beast—a fierce devouring dog, that he should commit such abominable wickedness, that his very nature even shuddered at the thoughts of. But the history assures us "lust had conceived, and it brought forth sin ;" which ended in the murder of his royal master. For he fully verified all the prophet's prediction.

Boast not of thyself, O christian. Say not, I am a converted man, a believer in Jesus, not an unclean wretch like this Hazael ; therefore I shall not fall into that and the other sin. Be not high-minded, but fear. Thou standest not by thine own strength, but by faith ; which ever leads out of thyself to its object, Christ. Flatter not thyself that thy corrupt nature is in any wise better than another : Know there is no difference. Deceive not thyself with the conceits of perfection in the flesh, or with the deluded dream that the root of sin is intirely destroyed in thy nature. Ever remember "that in the flesh dwells no good thing ;" that it is and will be prone to evil continually. Happy for thee that thou art new-born, new-created in the spirit of thy mind. It is thy privilege to live under the influence of grace and love. But still thy fallen nature is ever the same—the old man is still alive—there is the tinder of corruption, which may take fire from the devil's sparks of temptation. What thou art least suspecting, yea when thou art most confident of standing, thou mayest be in the greatest danger of falling. And what thou fearest not to day, to-morrow may overcome thee. Think not more highly of thyself than thou oughtest to think. Be sober and watch unto prayer.

Sin has a thousand treach'rous arts

To practise on the mind ;

With flatt'ring looks she tempts our hearts,

But leaves a sting behind.

She pleads for all the joy she brings,

And gives a fair pretence ;

But cheats the soul of heav'nly things,

And chains it down to sense.

Let us run with patience the race set before us.
 Heb. 12. 1.

A lively faith begets a chearful heart. A joyful hope makes a resigned soul. An humble mind produceth a patient spirit. So we run with pleasure our short race, while our eyes are fixed upon Jesus. But alas, shame to us, there is a sin which easily begets us, and which draws a train of burdens and distresses along with it. Why are poor disciples minds harassed by frequent murmurings and impatience, their tempers soured with evil passions, and their tongues speaking hasty, angry, unbecoming speeches? Verily, unbelief is the cause of all this. Their minds are clouded—they do not see Jesus—they do not consider Jesus as seeing them—they do not look to Jesus for patience—so satan gets an advantage over them. Pride begets impatience of spirit, and, with stetful Jonah, they cry out, “I do well to be angry.”

Well, soul, and how do you find your mind after doing thus well? what is the frame of your soul after thus gratifying the will of the flesh, your proud self-will? what hast thou gained hereby but dejection of spirit and sorrow of heart? what hast thou lost? Even the comforting view of Jesus, and the sweet sense of peace; thus the feet are entangled in a snare; and instead of running with patience, we sit down in sorrow. Tossed by such stormy winds, in a tempestuous ocean, the poor bark seems driven back many degrees from the haven of rest and peace. So we suffer loss of patience by looking from Jesus to other objects. While our Beloved is viewed, patience possesses the heart, and the feet run with delight and alacrity the way of God's commandments, and we look forward with chearful hope. Patience sweetens afflictions, improves exercises and trials: It is that grace which keeps the heart from envy, the hand from revenge, and the tongue from evil-speaking; because it draws all its strength from the feeling of Christ's love, tasting the sweetness of his presence, and longing for the enjoyment of his glory. Whatever can befall such souls is the wise allotment of their loving Father? They are exhorted to “run with patience,” that they may not lie down in sorrow. So shall the Sun of consolation shine brighter on their souls, while “they press forward towards the mark, for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 3. 14.

O let my thoughts be humble still,
 And all my carriage mild,
 Content, my Father, with thy will,
 And quiet as a child.

The patient soul, the lowly mind
 Enjoys a sweet reward;
 Let saints in sorrow be resign'd,
 And trust a faithful Lord.

He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. 1 John 5. 10.

Many of the weak lambs of Jesus are sadly perplexed in their minds on the nature of faith. Through the corruption of their hearts, the workings of the enemy, wrong notions they have been taught, and from the opposings of unbelief to the weakness of their faith, they are often ready to question, nay sometimes to conclude, they have not the faith of God's elect. Here the apostle lays down a certain fixt rule to determine by. This, if clearly understood in the light of the Spirit, will satisfy and comfort weak hearts. The apostle doth not say, He that believeth, hath no sin, no doubts; and that he is filled with all joy and peace, and hath full assurance of his own salvation, and clear knowledge of his sins being forgiven. No: but he hath the witness in himself. Of what? To the truth as it is in Jesus, which men nor devils cannot destroy. Verily, that though he is a poor lost creature, a weak helpless sinner; so weak, that he cannot do any thing to save himself; so vile, that he is naturally at enmity to Jesus and his salvation. But yet that the Lamb of God came to seek and to save such—that there is salvation in him, and no other—that the least measure of faith on Jesus is the gift of the Spirit. The weakest believer is wholly indebted to his grace for shewing him Jesus, and inclining his heart to look to him only for salvation. Thus he hath the witness of the love of the ever-blessed Trinity in the salvation of poor sinners; the love of the Father, in the gift of Jesus; the love of the Son, in coming to seek and to save those who were lost; and the love of the Holy Ghost, in making this known in his word and by believing inwardly in the heart.

Happy would it be for poor sinners if they were more concerned to look steadily to the work of Jesus, and to consider the fullness of his redemption, and the freeness of his salvation, and regard the inward witness of the truth of this upon their hearts, as the matter of comfort; so would their doubts and fears vanish—the fruits of faith more evidently appear—and their minds, in God's own time, shall be fully satisfied about their own interest in Jesus; and they shall enjoy the knowledge of forgiveness of their sins, by the sealing and witness of the holy Spirit, through faith: for faith above all other things hath the preeminence. If the soul is filled with peace and joy, it is in believing. If with assurance of pardon of sins, it is through faith in Jesus. If sealed with the Spirit, it is in believing. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John 5. 4.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
2 Cor. 11. 3.

By a godly fear in the heart, the Lord keeps his people from totally departing from him. But there is ever danger from satan, from men, yea and from brethren too, of our minds being corrupted and beguiled, so as to suffer the loss of that singleness of eye, and simplicity of heart towards our dear Saviour, by which the soul is only kept happy. If the Lord's prophet had been more jealous over himself, and more simple to his Master's voice, the fair speech of his brother had not betrayed him to disobedience and death by the mouth of the lion, see 1 Kings 13. 24.

Could satan so beguile Eve, as to make her an instrument of death to the dear partner of her life, and all their posterity? O disciples, "take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders." Jer. 9. 4. Why this? Alas, because "they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth." ver. 3. Satan's subtilty hath robbed them of Christ's simplicity. The abiding, comforting, presence, the sweet fellowship of Jesus is obscured to the mind. This plain, simple, easy truth, salvation by Jesus, is not constantly lived upon: the lively actings of faith, the constant outgoings of the soul, the continual looking to, and simple hanging upon Jesus for salvation, from hour to hour, is not enjoyed in the heart. Corrupted minds grow clouded. Hence they lose sight of our beloved Friend; sweet simplicity departs, and other objects too oft become the subjects of our converse and meditation. This is an infectious disorder; it rages among the children of God—it is easily caught. Simple faith in Jesus is bewildered by perplexing notions. Love to Jesus grows cold, by keeping at a distance from him. Satan cries, "There, there, so would I have it." And once poor, humble, simple hearts, get into doubting-castle. Though Jesus will never forsake them, yet he suffers their own folly to correct them. So by their smarting, he teaches them to be wiser. Chaste virgins are jealous over their eyes, their tongues and hearts, lest they give encouragement to unlawful love. The light of the body is the eye; "if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Matt. 6. 24.

Satan appears almost divine,

Like innocence and love;

But the old serpent lurks within,

When he assumes the dove.

Fly from the false deceiver's tongue,

Ye sons of Adam, fly;

Our parents found the snare too strong,

Nor should the children try.

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

1 Pet. 3: 15.

When the Lord Jesus is the glory of the soul, it is the soul's glory to sanctify him, and him only. How sweet, how joyful to the heart, when it finds itself detached from every other object, and every other hope, and its whole delight is to glorify its Lord and Saviour! How ravishing to dwell on the wonders of his love, the riches of his grace, the greatness of his sufferings, the fulness of his redemption, the perfection of his righteousness, the prevalence of his intercession, and the result of all issuing in eternal life and glory of such vile sinful wretches as we are! Verily, under such views afforded by the Spirit, how cheerfully does the believer sanctify the Lord Immanuel in his heart! Hence how powerfully is his soul animated with holy boldness against the fear of man! Yea, warmed and inflamed with love to the truth, how ready to give a reason of his hope! Perhaps, through the warmth of his zeal and the heat of his affections, he does not always act wisely, but does what he is forbid by his Lord, he casts his pearls before swine. And he has found, as they were ignorant of the worth of his jewels, they have turned upon him with wrath. The apostle seems to guard against this.

Though, christian, thou art to be always ready to answer, and to give a reason of thy hope. But to whom? Every man that asks with meekness and fear: meek, to receive instruction: fear of error, and desire to know the truth as it is in Jesus. As the christian has freely received, so it is his delight freely to give to others, if by any means the Lord may make him the happy instrument of conviction, conversion, and edification to the soul. Far is it from the nature of a christian "to eat his morsel alone." Though he is to imitate the meekness of the Lamb in his temper, yet also the boldness of the lion is to accompany his concern for the glory of God and the cause of truth. Meek in speech, but not with timid fear to answer. When God's truth is the subject, the strongest confidence and the greatest courage is our glory. And it is the joy of our hearts to be diffusive and to say with David, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Psalm 34. 11.

Let the vain world pronounce its shame,
And fling their scandals on our cause;
We glory in our Saviour's name,
And make our triumphs in his cross.

With joy we tell the scoffing age,
He that was dead has left the tomb;
He lives above their utmost rage,
And we are waiting till he come,

Great peace have they who love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. Pfal. 119. 165.

All inward peace and tranquillity of mind ariseth from the knowledge and love of the law of the Lord. But hath not the apostle told us "the law worketh wrath?" Rom. 4. 15. Have not believers experienced a sense of wrath in the conscience through "the knowledge of sin by the law?" Yes, verily. But this law, the moral law, is subservient to the everlasting law of love, the eternal covenant of grace and peace; therefore in time "it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;" even Jesus, the seed of the woman, in whom the law of peace and salvation centered—of whom the ceremonial law was a shadow—and by whom the moral law received perfect obedience to all its demands, and a full satisfaction for all its curse and penalties; even by the holy life and sin-atoning blood and sacrifice of Jesus.

This eternal law, or purpose of God, was manifested by promise from Jehovah himself, to the sin-convicted pair, immediately after the fall: and confirmed again both by promise and oath to the seed of Abraham, which is Christ: "This covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Gal. 3. 17. No; this law of life by promise is "sure to all the seed." It is immutable, it is unchangeable.

This law of salvation is the delight of believers; they have great peace from it. For, with Paul, they know "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8. 2. Hence, with David, they say, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." "Though many things from within and without grieve and offend them, yet nothing from the law of grace and truth shall. They shall not be offended because it teacheth that salvation is all of grace, according to election, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, applied to their souls in faith by the Holy Spirit. No; all this is their consolation and joy. The commands of Jesus do not offend them; they are all in love: "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5. 3. Thus all their hope and rejoicing is in Christ Jesus only, while they confidently and comfortably hope for eternal life, as the purpose of everlasting love, and God's free gift by Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 6. 23.

The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, &c. James 3. 17.

True knowledge centers in this one point, namely, that Jesus is our wisdom: Even as the sun is the only source of all light. From hence light is communicated to the earth freely. As that hath no power whereby to influence the sun to shed forth its comforting beams of light; so neither are we able or willing, while in a state of sin and folly, to exert any power to procure wisdom. But unasked, unsought, unmerited, Jesus, who is emphatically styled WISDOM, came down from above, that wisdom might once more be found in our nature. In him most conspicuously shone forth every perfection of purity, peace, gentleness, &c.

This is our gospel to believe, that thus Jesus hath "abounded towards us in all wisdom." Eph. 4. 8. So also it is the rich experience of his members, that "out of his fulness they all receive." Hence they are made wise unto salvation.

Nature, with all its powers, is averse to this; but wisdom seeks and apprehends us—causeth us to hear her voice, to be in love with her beauty, ere we so much as have one desire after her. The cry after wisdom, is wisdom in the heart. A desire after Jesus is from Jesus being known to the soul. Thus Christ prevents us, he cometh from above to us; then we soar from beneath after him.

This is the purity of true wisdom: It hath no mixture with any thing from beneath. All the human, carnal schemes of religion of the "wise of this world," as well as all the impurity of the flesh are contrary to and oppose it. And as it brings purity of affection to Jesus only, like a chaste virgin who has but one object of love; then it brings peace to the soul through the same object. Thus where Christ dwelleth in the heart by faith, that soul dwells in wisdom, and is united to purity and peace, &c. When the soul hath but once tasted this wisdom that cometh from above, there is an insatiable thirst after more; that so from this uncorrupted fountain the pleasing streams of purity, peace, gentleness, mercy, and good fruits may incessantly flow. Thus "wisdom is justified of all her children." Matt. 11. 19.

Nature with open volume stands
To spread her Maker's praise abroad;
And ev'ry labour of his hands
Shews something worthy of a God.

But in the grace that rescu'd man
His brightest form of glory shines;

Here, on the cross 'tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.

O ye sweet wonders of that cross
Where God the Saviour lov'd and dy'd!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounded bleeding side.

*Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou
hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*
Gen. 22. 12.

So spake Jesus to his friend of old. Thus Abraham, in the exercise of faith and love, gave full evidence that his commandments are not grievous. He proved that it was the joy and delight of his soul to obey his God. Lord, give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt, is the breathing of faith and love! Thus was the faith of Abraham justified before men by its fruits. Seest thou how his faith wrought by his works, and by works he gave full proof that he possessed the faith of God's elect. Thus he obtained this glorious testimony, to his own soul, from the mouth of the Lord, "Now I know that thou fearest God, with a loving, filial fear. Thy faith worketh by love; it has influenced thy heart to this eminent act of cheerful, unreserved obedience to me." Thus saith Jesus to every believer, "Now ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15. 14. The Spirit of God, by the pen of St. James, styles him a vain man who thinks he may have faith destitute of works.

It is the wisdom of a christian to know that his justification in the sight of God, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, is "perfect and intire, lacking nothing." This is received by faith only. But this belief cannot exist without its object Jesus; therefore it cannot be alone in the heart without love. Faith works by love, and love lives by faith. This inward principle manifests itself by obedience as an outward evidence.

Thus the believer's works are manifest that they are wrought in God, and that the soul is in the light of God's truth and love. But alas, it is an awful case amongst professors, as Paul said on another occasion, "Many are sick and weak among you, and many are fallen asleep." Through the intoxicating draughts of the love of this world, and living after the flesh, Such can have no inward testimony that they please God; nor do they possess joy and peace in believing; nor do they give outward evidence that they are married to the Lamb, and live a life of faith on him. "Examine thy own soul, O christian, whether thou art in the faith; prove thy own self. Knowest thou not thine own self, how that Jesus Christ is in thee, except thou be a reprobate." 2 Cor. 13. 5.

Grace, like an uncorrupted seed,
Abides and reigns within;
Immortal principles forbid
The sons of God to sin.

Not by the terrors of a slave,
Do they perform his will;
But with the noblest pow'rs they have,
His sweet commands fulfil.

Whom he justified, them he also glorified. Rom. 8. 30.

What poor scanty thoughts do we too often entertain of the love and beneficence of our covenant God? At best, our conceptions are too contracted. We are straitned in our own bowels, while we have no cause to be straitned in the superabounding grace of our Lord Jesus. We have little reason to borrow contracted thoughts of God's love from Egyptian task-masters. Our own corrupt nature too too often furnishes with carnal pleas and unbelieving suggestions, which weaken our faith, cool our love, damp our zeal, deject our spirits, and grieve our hearts. Simple hearts should have nothing to do but with the plain simple truths of God. Hath the Lord said it? He will also do it. Faith defies satan's power, and smiles at human contradictions. Though humbled souls lie low in self-abasement, yet their views are exalted to the highest confidence, by God's purposes, declarations and promises in Christ Jesus. So they are established in the truth.

All the blessings of grace and glory are sure to every believer; for all such are in Jesus beloved, justified, and saved in the sight of God. So also in themselves, they are discharged from guilt, absolved from punishment, acquitted from the curse of the law. When the Comforter brings the sweet knowledge of this to the conscience, then how do they triumph in Jesus. Satan cannot see this without envy. Then he stirs up all the powers of nature and corrupt reason to stop their glorying. Some poor teachers are not aware whom they serve, when they talk of Jesus' righteous justified members being consigned over to eternal damnation. But by Jesus they have a right to glory. And the Lord the Spirit glorifies every justified soul. The church the King's daughter he makes all-glorious within on earth. So each member hath a meetness for glory above. The glory of God lies near the hearts of such sanctified souls. The way of truth, and the paths of holiness are their delight. Sanctification of the Spirit, is inseparable from belief of the truth. Both spring from the electing love of God the Father, and shall most assuredly issue in certain salvation of every happy subject. So is the challenge of Jesus: "Father, I WILL that those whom thou hast given me be where I am." John 17. 24.

To God the only wise,
Our Saviour and our King,
Let all the saints below the skies
Their humble praises bring.

'Tis his almighty love,
His counsel and his care,

Preserves us safe from sin and death,
And ev'ry hurtful snare.

Soon all the chosen seed
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his wonders known.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. Matt. 11. 29.

Thus, with tender affection, speaks Jesus the prophet of his church to the lambs of his flock. He well knows they stand in need of daily instruction from him. He teaches them in the truth, as they are able to bear it. He knows the weakness of our understandings, and is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities: therefore, lest our poor hearts should at any time conceive wrong thoughts of him, contrary to his nature and office, "I am, says he, meek and lowly of heart." You find that you are poor sinners, ignorant of many truths, exposed to many dangers, exercised with many conflicts, trials and temptations. Do not think of me only as the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, but as dwelling also with humble and contrite ones. Look not on me as an austere Master, a terrible lawgiver, a severe judge, one who watches over you for evil, and is ever ready to take all advantages against you. No: I am your condescending, meek and lowly Saviour, your loving Friend and kind Instructor; therefore come and listen to my words, "Learn of me."

What sweet encouragement is this! Art thou, O soul, tossed with temptations, harassed with corruptions, beset with sinful passions, which bring disquiet upon thy mind, distress to thy conscience, and are a wearisome burden to thy spirits, so that thou dost not enjoy settled ease and composed rest? Remember thy Saviour's kind advice and lowly character. He hath an ear for thy complaints: a heart of love to pity thee, and a powerful arm to relieve thee. With sweet familiarity pour out thy heart to him. As to a bosom friend, tell him of thy sorrows, thy complaints and fears. Always bear in mind his kind invitation, the loving meekness and lowliness of his heart, and the blessedness of his promise: he hath spoken it, and will he not bring it to pass? he hath said it, and will he not fulfil it? "Ye shall find rest to your souls." Such sweet tranquillity and inward composure is to be found in no object besides him. Could the children of this world persuade us there is no evil in their vain diversions and carnal delights, still we know we cannot expect our Lord's presence, nor shall we find rest to our souls from the bewitching scenes of the play-house, &c. No; but the more rest we find in Jesus, the more we are delighted with him, and become dead to all things that are contrary to spiritual peace and joy from him.

Let me but hear my Saviour say,
Strength shall be equal to thy day,
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient grace.

I glory in infirmity,
That Christ's own pow'r may rest on me;
When I am weak, then am I strong,
Grace is my shield and Christ my song.

I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known : I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. Isa. 42. 16.

Here is a full proof of the personality of the divine Spirit, the third glorious person in the adorable Trinity, and also the nature of his office and operations in the oecconomy of the covenant of grace for the salvation of the elect. He will lead them into all the paths of truth. Truth is the very essence and perfection of Jehovah. The Father "hath chosen us from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2. 13. Jesus is essentially "the way, the truth, and the life," John 14. 6. by whom we are saved; and the Holy Spirit performs his office as a Guide.

We poor sinners, by nature, "are all gone out of the way." We are blind and see not the way, ignorant and know not the way, proud and have "turned every one to his own way; and if left to ourselves, through the darkness that is in us, should seek death and destruction in the error of our lives. But, adorable grace! the Spirit of love prevents this. He will guide to Jesus the Way, and into "all the truth as it is in him." So we enjoy life from him. A life of love and holiness now, and eternal life and glory hereafter. O the loving condescension of this heavenly Guide! yet it is natural for us to resist the Holy Ghost, often to grieve the loving Spirit, and quench his blessed motions. This is our chiefest grief. Yet such is his amazing love, such his sovereign power, that, like a most affectionate Friend, a benign Comforter, he takes us by the hand, yea takes our hearts into his hand, and will guide, counsel and direct us. This he doth outwardly by his word, and inwardly by his secret but powerful influences. In the light of his word of truth, we see how sinful, miserable and wretched we are in ourselves. But why doth he teach us this? Because we should not trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and deceive our own souls into perdition. By the word of his grace he teaches us the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in whom he shews us the love of the Father, the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin, and he turns us from the crooked paths of pride, self-will and self-righteousness, into the straight paths of truth and holiness. Here, O believer, is thy mercy. The operations of the Spirit are the acts of the sovereign Lord. "He will work, and none shall let it." They are the fruits of covenant-love, therefore shall certainly guide thy soul through all the mazes of a sinful world to eternal life and glory. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God." Rom. 8. 14.

Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds. Heb. 12. 3. +

Come, christian, look up, look forward, and be of good courage. Though thy exercises are many and thy conflicts great, though weary in, yet grow not weary of, the ways of the Lord. Verily in due time we shall reap an harvest of eternal felicity, after all our present toil and labour, if we faint not, but continue to the end, persevering in the work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope. The battle is the Lord's. Thy foes are all conquered. Victory is obtained. The crown is held forth by thy conquering Lord. In his strength press on. But alas! thou findest contradiction and opposition from every quarter; from within and from without, numerous are those which rise up against thee. Thy strength is small; thy power weak. Most true. But know thy calling—study thy privilege—look neither to the right nor left—backward nor forward, so as to deject thy mind by considering all that is against thee. For the Comforter holds forth a reviving cordial this day to thy drooping spirits. “Consider him,” Jesus thy blessed substitute, who “endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.” This consideration is the christian's triumph. The view of this gives fresh life and vigour to the mind.

Thus Samuel exhorts, “Consider what great things the Lord hath done for you?” 1 Sam. 12. 24. To what end? Truly that they might be the more confident in his love, and the more courageous by his power against their enemies. Thus, O disciple, arm thyself with the same mind, by considering what thy Lord sustained, what he suffered, what great things he hath accomplished for his Father's glory, and thy salvation. View, consider Jesus, opposed and reviled in every scene of his innocent life. See him speechless at Pilate's bar, amidst clamour and contradiction from sinners on every side against his innocent soul. Consider the taunts and jeers he bore on the accursed tree. In patience he possessed his soul, in meekness he endured it all. Was this merely to leave us an example? Infinitely more. It has been observed, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. Confident we are that the patience, sufferings and blood of Jesus, are the life of our graces, the spring of our comforts, the support of weak minds, the only reviving cordial to fainting spirits. Though thou art a poor weak, panting sinner, at his footstool, yet consider Jesus makes us joyful before his throne now, and we shall stand with boldness before him at the great day.

And they laughed him to scorn. Matt. 9. 24.

WONDERFUL indeed is our Master in patience, meekness, love and goodness, under such insult and scorn. "When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad, for he was desirous of seeing him of a long season, because he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him." Luke 23. 8. Miracles may satisfy the curiosity. But they do not, from their own nature, convince the judgment, nor convert the heart to the truth. This is plain. For Herod saw in Jesus a most astonishing miracle. Behold innocence itself arraigned and vehemently accused—death in its most cursed and ignominious form threatened. Amazing to consider! Jesus stood mute, his tongue was locked up in silence, and his mighty arm, which could have dealt destruction at a blow, was suffered to be bound; and himself set at nought, mocked, and in derision arrayed in a gorgeous robe of mock royalty; WHITE, saith Beza. So Herod, though undesigned, shall give him a token of his innocence; as Pilate, contrary to his judgment and intention, shall give him a title, "This is the King of the Jews" and though requested to alter the words, he was constrained to be inflexible and reply, What "I have written," I will not revoke.

You see your calling, brethren. It is to confess and follow a once laughed at, scorned, ridiculed Jesus. Never once dream of being excused pledging our Lord in the same cup. So sure as thou dost "witness a good profession" of faith in Jesus and conformity to him, thou also shalt not escape laughter and scorn from the carnal world, nor of being arrayed by them in the contemptible garb of a fool's-cap and a madman's coat. Time was when we acted as they do. Think of this, and be humble. Give him the glory, who taught us better. But what harm can this do us? Harm! it is our greatest glory on earth. "Such honour have all his saints." It is an honour angels share not in. Poor sinners only are called thus to glorify their Master. True it is galling to the flesh. But "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." By the world's scorn pride is mortified, while the soul is joyful, and the Spirit of Christ and of glory rests upon us. The world laughs us to scorn; Jesus smiles and approves. Shall we be uneasy and grieve at it? No; our Master bids us rejoice, and be exceeding glad. Thus follow Christ, and fear not men.

In former times it was a proverbial expression, to shew the impossibility of a thing, "You may as soon turn a Christian from Christ as do it." Steadfastness here is our glory. In the things of God, said Luther, I assume this title, *credo nulli*, "I yield to none." As God's election is irrevocable, so let our confession of Christ be. Striving to imitate him in love and patience. "Put on (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." Col. 3. 12.

Thou hast received gifts for men. Psalm 68. 18.

The dedication of this Psalm, according to Beza, is to him that excelleth, even Jesus, the excellent one. It contains a glorious display of the Redeemer's kingdom. The royal prophet was highly favoured with clear and comfortable views of the ample provision which is made for poor rebellious sinners, in the settlements of the everlasting covenant of grace and love. Jesus is the rich treasury. All is treasured and laid up in him. So it pleased the Father—so it rejoiceth the heart of all his members, who, like Joseph's brethren, receive all from his hands. Jesus is the gift, the unspeakable gift of God the Father, John 4. 10. All his members are given to him. He is the medium, in whom Jehovah loves us, delights in us, and rejoices over us to do us good."

Alas, too too often, we are apt to think vainly, and talk arrogantly, to ascribe what we are, and what we hope for, to something in us, or done by us. So we lose sight of our own poverty; forget our kind Benefactor; and presently, this fervour of pride is succeeded by an ague of heartless dejection: Our hands hang down, and our knees grow feeble. For ever, blessed be God, salvation from first to last, is all of free gift by free grace, secured by free promises in Christ. So it is effectual to the hearts of sinners. So believers ascribe all the glory to the ever-blessed Trinity by Jesus. Are mine eyes opened to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Am I sensible of my deserts, my ruined, helpless state as a sinner? do I see the purity and spirituality of God's righteous law? do I despair of all hope and help in myself? is Jesus my refuge? do I see the glory of his righteousness, and perfection of his atonement? is the triumph of his cross, the victory of his death, the foundation of my faith, the support of my hope from day to day? These are love-tokens from Jesus. He sheds them on us as the free gifts of the Holy Spirit. So our hearts are enamoured with him, and knit to him in love. And for our farther consolation and joy, he still lives to bestow innumerable more, and infinitely greater gifts than what we have yet received; for if we have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, the harvest is sure. Every enemy shall be conquered, every lust subdued. Nothing less than perfect holiness and perfect happiness await us. Is sin atoned for by the blood of Jesus? and shall his members live without a sense of pardon? No: "Ask, says our munificent Benefactor, and receive, that your joy may be full. John 15. 11. Jesus is glorified; the Spirit is given to bear witness of love and salvation to us, to comfort and sanctify us. This is the joyful reasoning of faith. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how, shall he not with him also, freely give us all things?" Rom. 8. 31, 32.

Then said I, Woe is me: for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Isa. 6. 5.

When the glory of Jesus is manifested to the soul in the light of the Spirit, how doth it stain the pride of all human glory? The prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of Jesus under the new, were men of like passions, sinners, like unto ourselves. By nature there is no difference; they were all saved by the same precious Saviour of sinners. A sight of themselves in the light of truth humbled them to the dust. "O wretched man that I am," cries Paul the apostle. "Woe is me: I am unclean, I am undone," cries Isaiah the evangelical prophet. "God will suffer no flesh to glory in his presence." Jesus the Saviour alone shall be exalted. Man, the sinner, yet the subject of grace and salvation, shall be laid low—every hope in himself cut off—and the exceeding sinfulness of sin—and his deserts as a sinner confessed. Such are the saving effects of Jesus' love: such the humbling views of his Spirit. Yet it is very natural for the sensible sinner to write bitter things against himself; to pronounce a woe upon himself; and to cry out of his undone state, and unclean, polluted condition: As, when the sun shines, we see innumerable motes and atoms which were invisible before. But do we think this strange, after a soul has been favoured with a spiritual sight of Jesus, faith in him, and hope from him, to be sensible of, and cry out of our undone state? We should not think it strange. We should carry this view of ourselves with us all our journey through life, even till we come to the banks of Jordan's streams.

The most exalted saint, while in the body, is in himself, according to the flesh, carnal, sold under sin, burdened with a body of sin and death. But though, as thus considered in himself, he is in a woeeful, undone state; yet, being in Christ Jesus, a member of him, a believer, a new creature in him, there is no woe, no wrath, no condemnation; but peace, pardon, love and salvation from God the Father through our Lord Jesus. This is manifested to his soul by the ministry of the word of grace and the Spirit of truth; which, like the live coal which the seraphim took from the altar, [the sacrifice of Christ] and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." [Receive this comfortable doctrine into thy mouth; make confession with thy lips, what is most comfortable to thy heart to believe, that salvation is by Jesus only]; "for thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The bloody sacrifice of Jesus hath done this. "Be not faithless, but believing." John 20. 27.

A bruised reed shall be not break, and smoking flax shall be not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. Matt. 12. 20.

Through a sight of their sinful state, a sense of strong corruptions, weakness of faith, and small degree of the knowledge of Jesus, young converts, like David, just come to the throne, are apt to say, "I am this day weak, though anointed king; and to fear with him, the sons of Zeruah, be too hard for me." 2 Sam. 3. 39. The accuser of the brethren, who is ever an adversary to Jesus and the truth, is always busy with such poor souls, to stamp upon their minds the blackest impressions, and to paint the Saviour, not as loving, gentle, and merciful to relieve the distressed, and comfort wounded, afflicted consciences, but as a rigid, austere, and cruel exactor. When carnal reason joins in with this false accusation, it is sore distress and conflict to the mind. But to the law and to the testimony. How readest thou, O soul? "It is right thou shouldst bear the indignation of the Lord, because thou hast sinned against him." Micah 7. 9. The Saviour sees it fit. By this he means to teach thee the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that thou shouldest abhor it, be humbled for it, and forsake it; yea also, as the greatest blessing above all, that thou shouldst look to him, believe on him, and love him. But this thou never wilt do, while thou dost not consider him as a precious Saviour for the lost and guilty. True, in thyself thou art like a bruised reed shaken with the wind of temptation, and oppressed with sin and distress, weak and helpless, ready to fall into despair and perish without hope. As smoking flax thou seemest to smoke, but not to burn; rather offensive to thyself, because of the vapours of corruption. These blind thine eyes, and are a stench in thy nostrils. And so poor sensible souls are apt to think themselves to be to the view of Jesus. But saw he any amiable dispositions in the sinner's character to invite him from heaven to earth? being come to seek and to save the lost, and to be the physician of sin-sick souls, waits he for their health and soundness ere he reacheth forth his healing hand? doth the Friend of sinners break in pieces, with a rod of iron, the sin-wounded, heavy laden soul? That be far from the loving heart of Jesus. Far be that from any poor sinner's heart to conceive. Nay, but he pleads the cause, he will execute judgment, for all such, over every adversary. He shall not break, he shall not quench till judgment is denounced, and victory proclaimed. Satan's accusations, unbelieving suggestions, shall be condemned and cast out by the word of truth, and the power of the Spirit; and the weakest believer "shall overcome and obtain victory by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of the testimony of Jesus." Rev. 12. 11.

The fruit of the Spirit is- love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Gal. 5. 22, 23.

This numerous issue is of supernatural generation; like Isaac, who sprang from the dead body and barren womb of Abraham and Sarah. Hence, though believers love to bring forth such fruits, delight to see them, yet, through humility, they are backward to own them, and averse to glory in them as productions of their own. Hence, when these fruits of the Spirit appear inward or outward, like the bride of the Lamb on another occasion, she cries out in lowliness of the heart, "Who hath begotten me these?" Isa. 49. 21. But is any thing too hard for God? "He maketh the barren soul to be a joyful mother of children." Psalm 113. 9. To this very end, believers are "married to Jesus by faith, that they may bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. 7. 4. There is no member of the church, of which Jesus is the husband, barren: some bring forth more fruit than others—some more eminent for one kind, and some for another. Every one "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph. 4. 7. but it is by the same Spirit that dwelleth in all. Each esteem other's fruits better than their own. And the graces of a true christian shine brightest in the sight of his brethren. With the pleasant fruits of his Spirit, which his members bear, Jesus their head is delighted, and God the Father is glorified.

Thus is "the bride, the Lamb's wife, all glorious within." But yet conscious of what she was, of what she still is by opposing nature, which brings forth contrary fruits, she wears a conscious blush, and dare not glory in herself, knowing she is wholly indebted for the root of all grace, Jesus, as well as for the fruits of the Spirit, to unmerited grace and sovereign power. Thus holy Paul says, "I am become a fool in glorying," though compelled to it. That holy, faithful, loving, tender-hearted martyr of Jesus, ever stiled himself 'the unbelieving, unloving, hard-hearted Bradford.' Yet against such there is no law. The law cannot accuse or condemn those that believe in Jesus; "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8. 2. Indeed the law may trouble and terrify the conscience, but Christ, apprehended by faith, vanquisheth all its terror and threatenings; and having received the Spirit, through the faith of Jesus, the fruits of love, joy and peace shall abound more and more, "to the glory of the Father, who hath chosen them in Christ Jesus." Ephes. 1. 4.

That no flesh should glory in his presence: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Cor. 1. 29, 31.

Humble self-abased souls, who are drinking deep into the knowledge of themselves; daily sensible what human nature is; whose eye of faith is to the Lord Jesus, and their only hope what he is made of God to them—are as jealous of the pride of the flesh as they are of its sinfulness: This is a safe state. Such have little reason to murmur because they don't experience those high flights and ravishing ecstasies, which appear to arise from nature and sense, because they lead to glorying in the righteousness of the flesh. Flesh is proud; and prone to glory; even in the presence of God. But faith in Jesus cuts off all glorying in the flesh, as viewing all salvation out of ourselves in Jesus. This is the very essence of the faith of God's elect. Yet, while we are in the flesh we are daily exposed to the workings of pride, which darken the view of Jesus, and tend to self-exaltation and self-glorying.

What pains doth the loving Spirit take to humble us! he testifies of Jesus only—he shews us by line upon line and precept upon precept, by prophets and apostles, that “in Jesus all his children shall be justified, and shall glory.” Isa. 45. 25.

Am I made wise unto salvation? Glory to Jesus, this is from him! he is my wisdom. Am I righteous in the sight of God? Glory to Jesus! his life wrought it out; it is mine, but not by my works, but by God's free gift. Jesus is my righteousness. Am I sanctified? Glory to Jesus! it is through the faith of him, by the power of the Spirit, that I have any drops from the fountain of Jesus' blood to wash away my guilt, and to cleanse my soul. Have I faith in, and hope of complete redemption from all misery to all happiness? Glory to Jesus! he is my redemption—he hath bought me—he hath conquered for me. In whom then should I glory but in Jesus alone, in whom all my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption center? So “it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell.” So it pleases the Spirit to bear witness of, and to glorify Jesus. Shall we glory in the fruits of the Spirit as the foundation of hope, and the cause of our acceptance with God? That were to deceive ourselves. The Holy Spirit produceth no fruits in us to this end. This is contrary to his office—inverts the economy of the covenant—makes faith void—and turns the eye of the soul from the only object of hope and salvation—Jesus to somewhat within us, instead of Christ crucified for us. But by the Spirit we glory in Christ alone, and by faith we pray to be filled with the “fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Phil. 1. 11.

Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God: for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee: fear not, thou shalt not die. Judg. 6. 22, 23.

"Jesus is the same Lord over all, rich in mercy to all who call upon him." Rom. 10. 12. There is no difference between Old-Testament saints and new, in regard to the object of salvation, "Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Poor Gideon thought a sight of the Lord must be present death; for the Lord said to Moses, "There shall no man see me and live." Exod. 33. 20. But the Lord appeared to him as the angel of the covenant, the Mediator, the interposer; not in terrible majesty and fiery wrath to strike him dead, but as the Saviour, the merciful One. And this sight was attended with life to his soul and death to his fears. So Gideon found it, when he heard that ever-dear and most precious word, *PEACE*. This is ever the word of the Bridegroom to his church. His birth is ushered in with "Peace on earth, good-will towards men." His dying legacy to his children is peace. Nothing but love dwells in his heart. Nought but peace is heard from his lips. This was his affectionate salutation to his beloved (though dejected) disciples, when he first appeared to them after his sufferings, death and resurrection. His tender heart well knew how ruffled and discomposed their poor minds were, therefore over and over he repeats, "Peace be unto you." John 20. 21. And as it was in the beginning, so it is now. Jesus silences guilty fears, and perplexing doubts in disciples hearts. Woe is me, saith the poor sinner, I am undone, I am unclean; mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts, in the purity and spirituality of his law, as a just God, and a holy, a consuming fire, and who will by no means clear the guilty: I shall die. Fear not, saith Jesus to every such trembling, repenting, believing heart, thou shalt not die, but live; neither shalt thou want my peace: look unto me, and be saved. Inwardly listen in thy soul to my word. Wait in faith. By the sweet and still voice of my Spirit, I create the fruit of the lips, "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him." Such shall not only hear my voice, but feel my power. Their sickness shall be healed as well as their sorrow removed. So shall their souls be joyful in me.

My groans and tears, and forms of woe,
Are turn'd to joy and praises now;
I throw my sackcloth on the ground,
And ease and gladness gird me round,

My tongue, the glory of Christ's name,
Shall ne'er be silent of his fame;
His praise shall sound thro' earth and
heav'n,
For sickness heal'd, and sins forgiv'n.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, You must be born again. John 3. 7.

Spiritual doctrines ever appear to the judgment of carnal reason as foolishness. Marvel not to find the wisdom of the natural man ever crying out, "How can these things be?" and explaining away the spiritual meaning by corrupt reasonings. We are not to expect a total freedom from carnal objections from our own fallen nature. The old man is yet alive. The kingdom of his residence is at war against that kingdom into which the soul is spiritually born. Many souls see clearly the nature of the doctrine of a new-birth of the soul, and are convinced of the necessity of it, in order to see the kingdom of God. But how are they straitned, and in pain to know, whether it be accomplished in them? The time *when*, many are uncertain of; for the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. The manner *how*, none can explain: "For the things of God knoweth no man, but by the Spirit of God." But the effects are visible and evident. As sense and motion are the properties of natural life, so when the soul is born again of the Spirit, there is a sight of Jesus, a hearing of his voice, a motion of the affections of the soul towards him, believing him to be the way, the truth and the life. So St. John lays down this infallible mark, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." 1 John 5. 1. So also, there is a sight of sin in its filthiness, feeling sense of its burden, a hatred to it, and a resisting of it, and fleeing from it. These effects are natural to the new-born soul, as it is for the body to breathe when born into this world.

Hence, as a new-born soul, thy concern, thy daily concern, O christian, will be to study the Father's love; how free, how sovereign and eternal—the Son, thy elder Brother's work and salvation, how perfect, complete and finished—the Spirit's grace, how condescending, powerful and comforting! All tends to beget inflamed affections and chearful obedience. It is thy Father's command, "My son, be thou strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus:" And to this end, "as a new-born babe desire the sincere milk of the word, and thou shalt grow thereby in knowledge, love, peace, joy and assurance."

Who can describe the joys that rise
Thro' all the courts of paradise,
To see a prodigal return,
To see an heir of glory born?

With joy the Father doth approve
The fruit of his eternal love;

The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of his agonies.

The Spirit takes delight to view
The holy soul he form'd anew;
The saints and angels join to sing
The growing empire of their King.

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit. Gal. 5. 17.

Christian experience fully proves this apostolic truth. Hence the children of God do not the things that they would. Nor have we any authority from the word of God to conclude this lusting ever ceased in any of the saints till they got to glory, nor to expect that we shall be perfectly delivered from it while we carry the flesh about us. For as the renewed soul or spirit loves and enjoys spiritual and heavenly objects; so the flesh or unrenewed part prompts us to lust after those objects it is naturally conversant with, and which it derives its happiness from in enjoyment. Here is thy conflict, O christian. Hence the necessity of thy Lord's command, "Watch always."

What woful effects have the lusts or desires of the flesh produced in eminent saints? Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear. The conceptions of lust are the productions of sin, James 1. 15. The commission of sin contracts a fresh sense of guilt. This is the malady and sickness of the soul. Hence the many symptoms attendant on guilt; legal fears, terrors of conscience, accusations from the law, triumphs of satan, dejection of soul, distance from God, backwardness to duty, coolness of affection to Jesus, shyness at and neglecting of a throne of grace.

Alas, poor souls! when they have fallen, and are sensible of the melancholy effects; they feel the hurt they have received. Verily their hearts know the bitterness of it. Awful effects of fresh-contracted guilt! How much to be deplored! how carefully to be watched against, and prayed to be kept from. But whilst there is "a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," whilst the Mediator's "blood cleanseth from all sin," whilst the glad tidings of the gospel proclaim salvation by grace for sinners, there is no ground for black despair to backsliding children, though they have revolted from a God of love. For the power of his holy Spirit will renew all such again to repentance. Blessed effect of the Spirit, lusting against the flesh!

Thus saith Luther, 'The more godly a man is, the more doth he feel this battle between the flesh and the spirit, and hereof cometh those lamentable complaints in the Psalms and other scriptures. It profiteth us very much, to feel sometimes the wickedness of our nature and corruption of the flesh, that by this means we may be waked and stirred up to call upon Christ: And so a christian is made to see Jesus a wonderful Creator, which, out of heaviness, can make joy, of terror, comfort, of sin, righteousness, and of death, life. This is our ground and anchorhold, that Christ is our only and perfect righteousness.'

And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him? Judg. 6. 31.

When the Lord Jesus appears and manifests himself to the soul, it is so struck with his glory and grace, that it cries out in holy ecstasy, "What have I to do any more with idols? Hos. 14. 8. And an altar for spiritual worship is presently set up in the heart, and consecrated to Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord send peace.

So Gideon instantly obeyed the word of Jesus, the angel of the presence, the man, the peace, who appeared to him, and at his command he threw down the altar of Baal. He expected opposition from his Father's household, and from the men of the city, therefore he did it by night. A blessed instance of the obedience of faith joined to sanctified reason. As to the consequence after the work done he was "in nothing terrified by his adversaries." They demanded his life. But Joash his father was raised up like the fire of zeal from the Lord to argue with them. Will ye, ye men of Israel, ye professed people of Jehovah, will ye plead for Baal? will ye serve an idol?

Astonishing! but be not discouraged, O soul, though thou dost find great professors, children of the visible church thy mother, (it were well if none of the children of thy Father's grace join in) pleading by word or practice, for the life, love and dominion of Baal; which signifies he that rules or subdues, a master, Lord or husband; which may justly be applied to sin in general, and every idol lust in particular. So saith Paul, "His servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin or of righteousness." Rom. 6. 16. Thou free-man, thou heaven-born son of the Lord, know thy freedom; study thy liberty; strive, by the Spirit's aid, to live up to thy privilege, in spite of all that men or devils plead against it, above the domineering power of lusts, the galling yoke of sin. Thy Saviour has all power in heaven and earth. Plead with him. Expect power from him. Thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee. Faith surmounts every difficulty, silences carnal reasonings and vain pleadings from every quarter. While Jesus is viewed, sin is abhorred, and holiness loved, desired and increased in the soul.

Thou art my portion, O my God;
Make me to know thy way:
O cause my heart t' obey thy word,
And that without delay.

I choose the path of heav'nly truth,
And glory in my choice;

Not all the riches of the earth
Could make me so rejoice.

The testimonies of thy grace
I set before my eyes;
Thence I derive my daily strength,
And there my comfort lies.

Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty: only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. Gal. 5. 13.

It is recorded that Peter was grieved because his Lord should ask him the third time, "Lovest thou me?" Sure it ought to be matter of concern and grief to the loving generous heart of disciples, to think they yet stand in need of this caution of St. Paul by the Spirit. But verily we all need it. The most sanctified is yet in the flesh. And the flesh, with its affections and lusts, are alive, lusting and striving against the spirit: yea seeking an occasion to bring the holy happy soul, who is set at liberty from sin, satan and the law, in his conscience, under bondage to the law, and under thralldom to sin. Know thy danger. Dread thine enemy. Yea rather fear and love thy best friend, Jesus. Cry to him, Lord, keep me continually. "Thou hast delivered my [once captive] soul from the power of the enemy: thou hast brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and ordered my goings," and put a new song in my mouth, of praise to thee my Jesus, and my God. Psalm 40. 2, 3. Keep, O keep me from the deceitful workings and carnal reasonings of my corrupt sinful self, the flesh!

How ungrateful, how base is it, that it should ever enter into the thoughts of disciples to use, yea rather abuse the liberty wherewith a holy Jesus hath made them free? But what is not our vile nature prone to? what are we not in danger of from satan's subtle devices, and from the pleasing, soothing, enticing arguments of the flesh? it ever seeks its ease and gratifications. Though the doctrines of grace, and Jesus known and loved, bring liberty and peace to the spirit, yet they are constraint and bondage to the flesh. Both cannot be enjoyed by the same soul at the same time. We cannot serve God and mammon. We cannot walk in the liberty of the spirit, and yet fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Thou man of God, canst thou coolly and deliberately barter the light, the love, the peace, the liberty and joy of thy soul for the gratification of carnal lusts? Surely thou wilt reject that with the utmost abhorrence, and in unfeigned fervour cry out, God forbid!

What a glorious liberty are we called to! even a freedom from all sin in the conscience, from every condemnation of the law, and triumph over all the accusations of satan; so to live upon Jesus, as to consider ourselves in him as perfectly free from all sin, intirely dead to it, and the conscience so cleansed by his blood, as to be ever easy, serene and comfortable, as though we were innocent and never had sinned. O this is heavenly liberty to new-born souls! This creates a paradise upon earth. This is daily to be prized and sought for by the Spirit. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Gal. 5. 1.

I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. Isa. 57. 18.

What a glorious declaration of free-grace is this! an absolute promise of mercy, not excited by the worthiness of the creature, but proceeding solely from the loving heart of a covenant God. Well might David say, "In thy word do I trust: I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoils." Psalm 119. 162. The life of the soul is supported by the word of the Lord. This is the object of faith, the encourager of hope, and the exciter of love. Jesus is the essential word, by whom Jehovah speaks. The scriptures are the revealed truths by the Spirit of God's purposes, promises and grace. Behold, be astonished and humbled, O soul, at thy apostacy, backsliding and rebellion! Behold, admire, adore, and love the infinitely gracious procedures of the Father of all mercies. Here is a criminal arraigned at the bar—iniquity charged upon him—God's displeasure at it repeatedly declared—his chastising hand smote him for it. This reclaims not. The Lord hides his loving face—withdraws the light of his countenance. What is the effect? A froward behaviour—still walking in his own ways, contrary to the Lord. Might one not expect the next words should thunder curses and damnation? Be astonished, O ye heavens! What readeest thou, O man! It is not I have seen his ways, and will destroy him: but though I hate his ways, I love his soul. My superabounding grace shall reign and triumph over all the aboundings of sin. I will heal his soul; I will pardon him. Thou poor doubting soul, with the legal frames, go and learn what that meaneth, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Exod. 33. 19. Here is the glory of grace. This is the triumph of faith. Mercy proclaimed, shews the munificence of God. But the dejected heart may still be in suspence, Is it for me? Where, by faith, the truth is received by the Spirit, the comfort shall be applied. Whom God pardons in his heart, he leads the pardoned sinner to the knowledge and enjoyment of it, and restores lost comforts to the backsliding soul. A sense of pardon is the essence of gospel-grace, the result of Jesus' atonement, the gift of the gracious Spirit, and the privilege of believing souls. It is presumption to expect what God has not promised. It is thoughtless unbelief not to plead when God's word is our warrant to encourage us.

O may thy pard'ning grace be nigh,
Lest we should faint, despair and die!

Thus shall our better thoughts approve
The methods of thy chaſt'ning love.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Psal. 84. 5.

When hearts are united in love there is a mutual complacency and delight in each other. Presence increaseth pleasure; Absence begets uneasiness. Jealousy of displeasing and fear of offending, mutually subsist in each party. In some sense this holds good between the beloved soul and the loving Lord. All love is from him. And as rivers from the sea return back to the great ocean, so the love which comes from God naturally flows back in complacency and affection of soul to him. To know God is to love him; Both for what he is in himself, and what he is to us in Christ Jesus. The poor sinner, who knows that he is in himself "without strength," rejoiceth at his very soul to know that the omnipotent Jesus is his strength—that all his might and power to strive against sin, to resist satan, to overcome the world, is from above—it is treasured up in Jesus—and out of his fulness he is strengthened by the power of the Spirit through faith.

But is the converted heart a meer vacuum, like an empty vessel? No truly; Jesus dwells there by faith. It is a fit habitation for the Spirit; and the love of the Father is shed abroad in it "The ways of them," even Father, Son, and Spirit dwell there—the way of everlasting love and eternal election is delighted in—the way of free grace and complete salvation by Jesus is gloried in—the way of atonement by his precious blood—the way of justification and clothing of poor sinners by his perfect righteousness, is wholly trusted to and rejoiced in. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, as flowing from Jesus' finished work, in making the soul inwardly holy, and outwardly obedient to the Lord, in comforting and rejoicing the heart by the testimony of Jesus, is more and more sought after; and the hopes and views of glory in this sovereign, free, gracious way is longed after and expected. Blessed, O man, art thou indeed! Blessed of thy God! Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus! Blessed, not for days, months, and years, but loved to eternity and blessed to eternity! Thy Lord hath blessed thee, and he will not reverse it. Real godliness consists, not merely in a system of notions in the head, but in the indwelling presence of Jehovah in the heart.

How well thy blessed truths agree!

How wise and holy thy commands!

Thy promises how firm they be!

How firm our hope and comfort stands!

Should all the forms that men devise

Assault my faith with treach'rous art,

I'd call them vanity and lies,

And bind the gospel to my heart.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23. 1.

All comfort is derived to the soul, from the consideration and knowledge of what Jehovah is to us. This we know by the word of truth, and enjoy the sweet exercise of faith. "I am the good Shepherd," saith Jesus, John 10. 11. Thou art my Shepherd, says the believing soul. Thus, whatever office or character Jesus represents himself as sustaining, it is the glory of faith, not only to view the Lord as such, but to draw sweet peace and comfort from it. That thou art to me. David knew the duty of a shepherd by experience. How watchful to preserve from danger! and how careful a shepherd is to guide and feed his sheep committed to his trust? But herein is the peculiar love of the Shepherd of our souls; he "gave his life for the sheep." And after such love manifested to them, shall they want either his power to guard and protect, or his grace to supply their need? No; that is impossible. But a sheep is a silly weak creature; it often bleats and makes a noise when it wants nothing. Though it knows its shepherd, and hears his voice, still it is naturally prone to wander from rich and green pastures, to break out of the fold, and, if left to itself, would leap into the very jaws of its enemy. So foolish are we also. Hence arises our distress. And when we look to what we are in ourselves, and lose sight of the love and care of our dear Shepherd, we cast our eyes around us, and call in this distressing thought, and the other distracting care. Hence we often send forth the bleatings of unbelief, and cry out, 'We shall certainly perish for want of supply and assistance.' But where is the Lord our Shepherd? Alas, we forget his tender love, his covenant engagements, his watchful care. We listen not to the sweet voice of our Shepherd, but the enemy speaks in terror, and our poor hearts are afrighted and tremble. But in opposition to all that sin, satan and the law can say or do against us, "The voice of the Lord is a mighty voice. The voice of the Lord hath the preeminence." And Jesus our Shepherd saith, "I give unto my sheep, what—grace upon condition they will continue to be my sheep, and hear my voice, and follow me?" Infinitely more: security stronger than the mountains; comfort more unfathomable than the great deep. "I know my sheep: my Father gave them unto me: I lay down my life for them, and shall the enemy rob me of one of my purchased ones, or my dear Father of one of the objects of his love? No: they shall never want grace to keep, to quicken, to comfort, and enable them to persevere till they receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls: I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." John 10. 28.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 5. 3.

In the day of the Spirit's power "the lofty looks of man are humbled; the haughtiness of man is bowed down; and the Lord alone is exalted in that day." Isa. 2. 11. Then a man's own righteousness, wherein he trusted, is seen as filthy rags. His strength he boasted of is found to be perfect weakness: his heart, in which he gloried as good, is found to be deceitful and desperately wicked. Then he becomes a poor sinner. He knows his poverty—he feels his wretchedness. Thus, when Jesus alone is exalted in his fight, he becomes little, and vile, and mean in his own eyes; then he is poor in spirit, a meer **BEGGAR**, who must be wholly indebted to free-grace bounty, and free gift-mercy. Though he sees his state to be guilty, wretched and desperate, yet he is blessed? Why? is it because he sees and knows himself to be wretched, poor, miserable, blind and naked? Alas, this knowledge, like Job's friends, would prove but as a miserable comforter to his soul. He can no more trust in his known poverty and rags, to intitle him to the kingdom, than in his fancied robes and riches. But such are blessed or happy, because the grace of the kingdom is in their hearts now, "and theirs is the kingdom of heaven in glory." Most joyful consideration! they are chosen to it by the love of the Father; they are blessed in Christ Jesus with all spiritual blessings: And as an evidence of this, the Holy Spirit bestows on them, "Wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus: he enlightens the eyes of their understanding; then they know what is the hope of their calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Eph. 1. 17, 18. How unspeakably blessed! how immensely rich are the poor in spirit! "having nothing in the flesh, yet possessing all things in Christ Jesus."

It is usual, in worldly commerce, where a person's credit is not established, to value himself upon the credit of some rich merchant, so he gains credit and repute. Thus the poor sinner values himself upon Jesus Christ, for all esteem and acceptance in the sight of God: and herein we have confidence for all things. Who is our wisdom? Jesus. Who is our righteousness? Jesus. Who is our sanctification? Jesus. Who is our redemption? Jesus. He is our glory, our crown, our hope, and our daily rejoicing. Here, O soul, is thy precious inventory! read it, and rejoice at thy riches. "All things are yours;" Ministers, the world, life, death, things present, things to come, all are yours. Why, because you are faithful to grace, and have fulfilled terms and conditions to gain or secure the favour of God? No: infinitely higher cause: Thou art Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 2. 21.

Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ. Rom. 6. 11.

There is a death in sin which we are all naturally under. There is a death for sin; this our dear Saviour (we can never think of it too much, nor mention it too often) suffered on the tree. And there is a death unto sin, which every believing member of Jesus partakes of, first by virtue of union with him. For when Jesus died for sin on the cross, all his members were mystically considered in him, and dying in him, as their covenant head and representative, unto sin. And secondly, by communion with Jesus: The same Spirit which raised up Jesus the head, dwells in the mortal bodies of his believing members, quickning them to newness of life.

So from hence the apostle would have such reckon, infer, or conclude themselves "to be dead indeed unto sin." And on the same account, and for the same reasons, "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ."

Now, believer, how dost thou reckon, reason, and conclude of thy spiritual estate? because thou dost not find all sin dead in thee, but feelest the motions of sin stirring and raging for the mastery over thee? dost thou from hence judge of thy state, and conclude thou hast not the faith of God's elect? Alas, this will distress thy soul—weaken thy confidence of faith—administer life and vigour to thy sins and lusts—and bring death upon thy spiritual life of comfort, love, and holiness. The word of God is the only rule of our faith: by that we are to determine of our state. Though sin be alive in thee, yet thou art to reckon thyself dead to that; so as to have nothing to do with it. Though thou gronest under "a body of death," yet thou art to conclude thyself "alive unto God through Jesus Christ."

Here is "the mystery of faith." This is to be held in a pure conscience—thus there is freedom of access to God with boldness—here is the victory of saints—here is the triumph of truth against all the enemies to the death of sin and the life of holiness. Hence through the Spirit of truth springs thy daily comfort; thy continued growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus, and thy farther progress in personal holiness of life and conversation.

Do we not know that solemn word,
That we are bury'd with the Lord,
Baptiz'd into his death, and then
Put off the body of our sin?

So from the grave did Christ arise,
And lives to God above the skies.

Our souls receive diviner breath,
Rais'd from corruption, guilt and death;

No more let sin and satan reign
Over our mortal flesh again;
The various lusts we serv'd before,
Shall have dominion now no more.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations. 1 Pet. i. 6.

Spiritual joy is a fruit of the Spirit. It ariseth in the mind from a discovery of the divine Goodness, Truth and Faithfulness, engaged for our safety and happiness. The apostles were ever delighted when their pens were enumerating the saints joyful privileges, in their election according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit through the blood of Jesus, and of their present safety and certain glory, as being kept by the power of God through faith. The stronger our confidence is in these glorious truths, the greater our joy will be. We are to study them day by day. All our hope is in them, and all our comfort from them. If we derive comforts from any other object, they will be but short-lived, vain and delusive.

St. Paul was willing to be kept from glory for a season, and to abide longer in a body of sin and a world of woe, "for the furtherance and joy of the faith of the saints." Phil. i. 25. Such precious faithful ministers of Jesus, how truly valuable, how much to be loved by us! we cannot but love them for the truth's sake, and as helpers of our joy in the truth. And the more we grow and are established in the truth as it is in Jesus, so much the more shall we be out of conceit with the vain precarious human systems of mens devisings, which ever tend to subvert faith, fill us with confidence in the flesh and rejoicing in ourselves instead of rejoicing in the truth. But alas, in the seasons of various temptations, manifold trials, and great distresses, what can support us? Nothing in nature and self. Pleasing frames and joyful sensations may forsake us, and we shall, like the Psalmist, utterly faint, unless our faith and hope stand fast in the Lord who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. 13. 5. The poor soul, through the greatness of its exercises, sometimes grows heavy, dull and languid, the sun of comfort is clouded, and, like Paul on another occasion, is in the deep when neither sun, moon, nor stars, appear. Still the christian can never lose his foundation for rejoicing. Paul excepts not even seasons of heaviness, but exhorts "rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS," Phil. 4. 4. There is a "NEED BE" for such seasons. They are appointed by infinite Wisdom, are consistent with unchangeable love, and their continuance is determined by the faithfulness of a covenant God. These great and valuable ends are answered, God is glorified, and the soul profited by them. Are our troubles many in number, strange in kind, heavy in measure, and long in continuance? God's mercies are more numerous, his wisdom more wonderful, his power above all; therefore says David, "Thou who shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and comfort me on every side." Psalm 70. 20, 21.

He shall glorify me. John 16. 14.

Though the gospel is suited to our indigent state and distressed circumstances, yet to receive the truth in the love of it we are averse to, because of our loftiness of spirit and pride of heart: A system that tends to exalt and glorify us in our own eyes, and in the sight of others, we are naturally very fond of. This notion sticks close to us; we do not easily part with it. To imagine ourselves possessed of some inherent good dispositions and amiable tempers, in order to put us upon more respectable terms in the sight of God to gain his favour; this we are apt to mistake for the work of the Spirit of truth upon the heart. But as this notion leads from the faith and hope of the gospel, opposeth the glory of Jesus, lays another foundation than that which God himself hath laid, and tends to plume the creature with pride and vanity, we are taught to reject it as a spirit of antichrist and delusion.

This God complains of, and severely reproves his church of old for: "Thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot, because of thy renown." Ezek. 16. 14. But the blessed Spirit, that effects the marriage-union between the Lamb and his bride, the church, doth nothing upon the heart that it should trust in, so as to attract the affections from Jesus, or to produce incontinency, or unchaste behaviour to our rightful Lord. No: "the Spirit shall glorify, not himself alone as the agent, not yourselves as the subject of his operations, but he shall glorify me," saith Jesus, in your sight, heart and affections: he shall be continually bearing witness to my person and offices of the relation I stand in to you, the work I have undertaken and accomplished for you, that justification is solely by my righteousness; atonement for your sins is by my one sacrifice; and pardon of them by my blood; that I am your priest, ever before the throne, representing your persons, and pleading your cause. So shall you find peace in me, live daily upon me, and rejoice only in me.

Thus, by the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit, Christ alone is exalted and glorified, and our hearts comforted in truth, and sanctified in love, to the honour and service of our heavenly King. Thus to them that believe, Jesus is precious, because we see the Father's love center in him, and diffusing itself through his pierced heart to ours by the Holy Ghost given to us. Hence we become alive in our spirits and affections to God, and dead to self-seeking, self-righteous, self-glorying views; and die daily to carnal corrupt lusts and affections, which we know tend to dishonour our dear Lord, are contrary to his will, degrading of our souls, and rob us of sweet heart-felt communion with him. And the more Jesus is thus glorified, and we abide in him, so much the more are we enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit to the praise and glory of him. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," Rom. 8. 14.

Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? 1 Cor. 4. 7.

Perhaps few will assert, in so many words, with that haughty professor we read of, who replied to this text, "I make myself to differ; since I could resist God and divine pre-determination, but have not resisted, why may I not glory in it, as of my own?" Yet there is a proneness in our very nature to glory, through the pride which dwelleth in us. By line upon line and precept upon precept the Holy Ghost continually beateth down all trust in ourselves, and that which proceedeth from it also, all glorying in ourselves. His peculiar office is to testify of and to glorify Jesus; and the more we feel his sweet influence upon our hearts, we are hereby led out of ourselves, and are never so happy as when we glory in the Lord Jesus only, and are ascribing all that we are and hope for in time and eternity to the free favor, unmerited love, and distinguishing grace of God the Father in Christ Jesus.

Yet we dare not deny what the precious Jesus hath done FOR us, nor what the adorable Spirit hath done IN us, whereby we do differ from others and are distinguished from our former selves, when we were without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. Eph. 2. 12. And also from the rest of the whole world, which lieth in wickedness, [or in the wicked one.] But this is all of sovereign grace, therefore, "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Psal. 103. 1, 2.

We are made to differ in JUDGMENT. We no longer set our dear Saviour at nought, or so lightly esteem the love of God, as to think we can gain an interest in Jesus, and procure a title to God's favor by our own works. But we firmly believe, "God hath made us accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace." Eph. 1. 6. Hence our AFFECTIONS are turned to God in Christ by the power of the Spirit; Jesus is the delight of our souls, and the glory of our hearts. He is to us the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. The little we have seen and known of his love, his person, offices and work, so enamours our souls and endears him to our hearts, that we are continually longing to KNOW HIM more. Also our PRACTICE is hereby influenced to hate and forsake the trifling conversation, the vain amusements, sinful vanities and carnal delights, which are pleasing to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. In the fellowship and enjoyment of our God and Saviour is our heaven upon Earth. By the love of Christ we become dead to all that is contrary to his will. Thus saith God of his church, "I will be the glory in the midst of her." Zech. 2. 5.

For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, amen, unto the glory of God by us. 2 Cor. I. 20.

Through the workings of our carnal frames, it is natural to us to seek comfort from legal works instead of gospel-grace, when a poor sinner hath been taught by man to believe, "If he performs the condition, he shall surely receive the blessing of the promise." From this mistaken notion he labours and toils for a season; but finding himself unable to reduce the doctrine to practice, he sits down in dejection, and gives up all hope of mercy in this way. This will be the case, where sincerity is not suffered to give way to self-deceit. But when the Sun of righteousness ariseth with glory on the soul, these mists of ignorance flee away. When the love of the everlasting covenant is made manifest to a sinner's heart, by the Spirit, he cries out in wonder and ecstasy, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." When, by faith, he beholds Jesus, the surety of the covenant, sees all the promises of life and salvation center in him; Jesus is the hope of his soul, and the joy of his heart.

Blessed be God for a precious Christ, for precious promises, and for precious faith. What could our God do more? what could he give more to his people, which he hath not graciously done for them, or not freely given to them? Disciple, wherefore dost thou doubt? Thou art reading a gloomy lecture over thy fallen state, sitting with folded hands and dejected look because thou feelest the corrupt workings of thy sinful flesh; and the result of thy thoughts has brought forth that black monster unbelief. This dares to gainsay the truths of God, deny his promises, set the Saviour at nought, and rob him of his glory. What, because thou canst not find nor feel any thing in thyself to deserve God's love, no reason why he should make one promise of mercy: Wilt thou conclude against the greatness of his love and freeness of his promises? Yea, but it is for that very reason, though thou hast nothing in thyself but sin and misery: Thy God will have all the glory of his own grace in saving thy soul, according to his promise in Christ Jesus. The Lamb, who spilt his blood for sin; who hath righteousness for the naked, and a tongue to plead the cause of the destitute, has all the promises in his hands to bestow on his needy members. They are all in him. Therefore is it, that out of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace. So it pleaseth the Father, that all fulness should dwell in him; so the holy Spirit giveth us to believe and come to the inexhaustible fulness of Jesus for our every supply. Here we may fix our faith, and in the assurance of truth be confident we shall want nothing. For this very end is connected with our comfort, "the glory of God." Therefore every promise of grace here and glory hereafter are sure, YEA and AMEN, so be it. So it shall be certain and sure, "according to God's purpose and grace in Christ Jesus."

2 Tim. I. 9.

Fear not, thou worm Jacob. Isa. 41. 14.

In the light of truth, and under the influence of the Spirit, every believer in Jesus loses sight of the once fancied dignity of his human nature, and sinks in the view of himself to the meanest reptile. Probably, the church in Isaiah's days had been considering her weak helpless state, as surrounded with trials and difficulties, exposed continually to the power of enemies on every side, and her great danger of being trodden under foot and crushed to death, and had been laying her case before the Lord, and in the words of David, confessing, "I am a worm and no man." Psalm 22. 6. Well, the Lord condescends to reply to such humble souls in their own language, "Though thou art as mean in thine own eyes, and as despicable in the sight of others, as a poor, base, insignificant, crawling worm of the earth, yet art thou precious in my sight: though thou hast no power in thyself to resist thine enemies; no strength to support thyself under thine afflictions and distresses; though satan threatens, troubles bow thee down, corruptions rage, and all the combined force of earth and hell is enraged against thee, yet, fear not thou worm, saith the Lord."

Thou soldier of Jesus, "fear not," is the word of command from the Captain of thy salvation. Scarce any phrase so frequently occurs as this in the word of God. Consider it as an antidote against all thy fears, despondings, doubtings and dejections. Thou canst never fall into any exercise, be under any temptation, be visited by any affliction, come into any straits or difficulties, but what the power of God can support thee under, and bring thee safely through. Consult not human probability—judge not according to appearances—say not, 'Worm as I am, I shall surely be crushed.' Nay, but is any thing too hard for God? He saith, "I will help thee"—I will succour—I will support thee—I will strengthen thee—my grace is sufficient for thee. Can a God of truth promise in vain? will a God of love ever fail to assist? doth not a God of wisdom know when to deliver? Suffice it, we have his promise, that engages his truth, and that demands our faith to honour him. But "I am with thee," saith the Saviour. He is present, though perhaps thou thinkest otherwise, and feelest not his comfortable presence. Thy most secret sigh, as well as every distress, lies open to his view. The crafty designs of thy subtle foe, and all his vilest stratagems, are without a covering before thy Lord. Terrify and distress thee he may, but prevail over thy soul he shall not; for he that keepeth Israel, neither slumbereth, nor sleepeth, but is ever watchful and powerful to keep; and he hath given us this absolute promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." Isa. 54. 17.

If a man think himself something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. Gal. 6. 3.

The leaven of Pharisaism, which is pride, self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency, is interwoven with our very nature. In the beginning that arch-deceiver satan poisoned the minds of our first parents with that corrupt doctrine, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" and this infection hath tainted the whole human race. Naturally every man deceiveth himself by thinking himself to be what in reality he is not. Hence his rooted enmity to the salvation of Jesus and the grace of the gospel. Here man is nothing. Here the creature is utterly annihilated. As St. Paul saith of an "idol, it is nothing in the world;" so that idol, a man's self, is nothing, knows nothing, can do nothing in the great work of salvation. Fallen nature, with all its boasted goodness, affected piety, devout efforts, contribute nothing; for "all is of grace," free and sovereign grace. Man, with all his vaunted "knowledge of good and evil," his free-will to choose the good and refuse the evil, his rectitude to perform his duty and secure his salvation by fulfilling the terms and conditions of the gospel; all these non-entities are found lighter than vanity when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary; for Jesus is all in all.

O believer, when thou thinkest thyself nothing, knowest nothing of thyself, then thou thinkest and knowest right. But when thou art led to think, "now I am something in myself, now I know something by myself; now I can do something of myself to keep myself in the favour of God, and to be faithful to his grace;" verily thou deceivest thyself. This is acting like the church of Galatia under spiritual witchcraft, "beginning in the spirit and ending in the flesh." This is in the strict and proper sense falling from grace. So nature's pride exalts ones-self, and censures other Christians as carnal and unfaithful. This pride of the flesh withstands a growth in grace, and is contrary to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To know the grace of God in truth, it to own its sovereign energy and operations upon the soul, steady as the sun in its course, uncontrollable as the wind in its power, unfrustrable as the tide in its motion, and as unyielding to the power of nature and the will of man, as the proud waves of the great ocean. To "put on the Lord Jesus," is to "put off the old man with its deceitful lusts" and pride. To "rejoice in Christ Jesus," is to "have no confidence in the flesh." For the Lord will "suffer no flesh to glory in his presence." "Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1. 31.

Be careful for nothing : but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Phil. 4. 6.

X All anxious cares which torture and distress the mind arise from unbelief: They are contrary to our profession—dishonourable to our God—and hurtful to the peace and comfort of our souls. Therefore, they are forbid by the gospel of grace, in love to the children of God. But, believer, thou hast not so learned Christ as to pass away a life of careless indolence and thoughtless inactivity. No; vigilance, industry, and fervency of spirit, is a suitable frame for thee to be found in: Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord—careful and diligent in the use of all means in thy power, both to procure the subsistence and welfare of thy body, as well as to keep up the liveliness and vigor of thy soul. Careful and diligent, yet without care that hath disturbance and distress. As to the things of this life, it is sufficient to answer all thy anxiety, and silence thy fears and doubts, “your heavenly Father, saith Jesus, knoweth you have need of them.” He feeds the birds, and will he suffer his babes to starve? Thou shalt have all things needful for life and godliness.

As to spiritual blessings, “He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up a sacrifice for thy sins: how shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?” The Father that hath “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus,” will hand them out to us by his Holy Spirit, in number, weight and measure, just as his wisdom sees best. And it is thy wisdom to be content and thankful. Here is encouragement for faith and prayer.

And canst thou look within, without, around, above, and see no matter, no cause of thanksgiving and praise, O christian? are not what thou hast in hand, and what thou hast in hope, the free gifts of the grace of thy God? Call to mind his mercies to excite gratitude. Reflect on his promises to quicken in prayer. Under all thy trials, distresses, sorrows, fears, doubts and difficulties, here is sweet encouragement for thy soul: speak them out freely; make thy requests familiarly unto God. And what shall be the happy consequence. Hear and rejoice, thou shalt have more than all thou canst ask or think. And “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ.”

Christ ever lives to intercede
Before his Father's face:

Content, my soul, thy cause he'll plead,
Nor doubt the Father's grace.

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness. 2 Cor. 12. 9.

Spiritual conflicts with the enemy of souls is the lot of God's children. Holy Paul was under deep and afflicting distress of soul. Satan the adversary assaulted him very powerfully. He groined under it, and frequently besought Jesus that this grievous and painful messenger of Satan might be made to depart from him, and that the conflict might be at an end. O what distressing exercises God's children undergo from the enemy! The hearts of such only know the bitterness thereof. But is the Captain of their salvation regardless of them? is he deaf to their prayers when they call on him? No: he ever hears, he always answers in love. But did the Lord grant his dear servant's request? No; then the design of love would not have been answered. Paul was in danger of being "exalted above measure." This was to be prevented. He was to "glory in infirmities." This was to be effected: Satan's design was for his evil; Jesus makes it work for good. But that he might not faint, this comfortable answer is given, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Here is the strongest assurance for the confidence of faith, and the most solid ground for the rejoicing of hope. The grace and love of Jesus opposed to the malice and hatred of Satan; the strength of Jehovah triumphing in and made illustriously glorious through saints weakness. O what an ever-loving, all-sufficient, omnipotent Lord is Jehovah Jesus! The Lord whom thou serveest, believer, knows thy every distress and conflict of soul. He will strengthen thee in, support thee under, and bring thee safe through and out of all thy exercises and troubles. Thou shalt lose nothing in the furnace but the dross of nature's pride and corruption, and the vanity of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. God by his Spirit will teach thee to profit in humility and self-diffidence, and to glory in and exalt the Lord Jesus more and more. Sweet and encouraging is that promise to God's church and people, in general, strong and comforting as God's particular declaration to Paul. Isa. 41. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

I can do all things, or can bear
All suff'rings if my Lord be there:
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While his left hand my head sustains.

But if the Lord be once withdrawn,
And we attempt the work alone:
When new temptations spring and rise,
We find how great our weakness is.

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. John 7. 24.

By acting contrary to this advice of our prophet, the children of God often distress their poor hearts, perhaps in no one instance more than this. "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped," said the Psalmist. Why? what was the cause? Alas! alas! He had been looking at the outward appearance of the wicked. How happy, gay and joyful they seemed! so that nature and sense had almost erected a tribunal in opposition to faith and truth. "Verily, says he, I have cleansed my heart in vain, &c." But he was soon undeceived, and brought to "judge righteous judgment," from the records of truth in the sanctuary of his God.

Professors of old had a severe check, Mal. 3. 13, &c. for thus judging: "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord." Ye have said it is vain to serve God, &c. You call the proud, that is, the self-righteous, but disobedient persons whom I resist and abhor, happy. Christian, beware of judging of men: be cautious of determining of matters by appearances. They are very fallacious, often deceitful. Judge of no man's state by appearances. Evil actions we may condemn; good actions we should applaud. But to judge and determine the eternal state by appearances, we have no authority. It was a judicious speech of St. Austin, 'If I see a wicked man die, shall I say he is gone to hell? I dare not. Shall I say he is gone to heaven? I cannot.'

How awful were the falls of David and Peter! To what dreadful lengths of cruel persecutions against Christ, his truth and members, did Paul run? and yet how did the rich grace of our God triumph in their repentance and salvation? Therefore, believer, even as to thine own eternal state, judge not from present sense and appearance, though all things seem against thee. Oppose not thy frames and feelings to God's truth, love, grace, promises and oath in Christ Jesus. And they all point—to whom? Even to sinners, lost and perishing sinners. Whatever else thou hast lost, a sense of this is with thee. "And this is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, [at all times] That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And is there a doubt in thine heart, a fear in thy mind, a sin upon thy conscience, but he is able to relieve and cleanse thee from?

Not different food or different dress
Compose the kingdom of our Lord;
But peace and joy and righteousness,
Faith and obedience to his word.

When weaker Christians we despise,
We do the gospel mighty wrong,
For God, the gracious and the wise,
Receives the feeble with the strong.

And the children struggled together within her: and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. Gen. 25. 22.

Very uncommon and extraordinary was the case of Rebekah; an inward commotion and strong contention between the fruit of her body, alarmed her greatly. Each threatening death to the other, and herself also. Happy her conduct. In this distress, she seeks satisfaction from the Lord. A noble instance of faith and familiarity with the God of Israel. This also was written for our learning. A very just and striking emblem is this of the Christian. As verily as Jacob and Esau were in the womb of Rebekah; so is the Christian the subject of two contending parties, the old and new man, flesh and spirit. The life of each is opposite to the other. Each is striving for the mastery over the other. Here is the daily conflict of disciples.

To good and evil equal bent;
Sinful in nature, yet a saint.

Hence the poor groaning, burdened believer, like Rebekah, often goes to inquire of the Lord Jesus; and, like Paul, in conflict of soul, is crying out, "O wretched man that I am." Yea, like Rebekah, is sometimes weary of his life, because of the daughters of Heth, the numerous progeny of corrupt lusts of the flesh. Here is an evidence of spiritual life. This is a full proof of the strugglings of a sanctified holy soul. Though the poor heart is crying out, 'I a saint, I a member of the holy Jesus, I a child of God. O surely it cannot be. If so, why am I thus?' Know, O soul, that it pleased the Father that all fulness of grace should dwell in Jesus. He suffered thy fall into this state, that he might raise thee by Jesus. And he is pleased to leave thy sinful nature, vile and corrupt as he found it, until it shall be "sown a vile body." Thou art like Rebekah, waiting for deliverance. Suffice it, that thou live by faith in Jesus; "wait in hope for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body." Rom. 8.23. But yet thou art called in love, daily to "put off the old man with his deeds—to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts." But yet to reckon thyself after Christ in thy new state, possessed of perfect righteousness and true holiness. Here the Lord thy God delights in thee, sees no spot, but perfect beauty. So shortly shalt thou be presented, to the Father by Jesus, perfectly holy and without blemish, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Eph. 5.27.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Cor. 5. 1.

It is the grand device of that arch-deceiver satan to represent the religion of Jesus as tending to melancholy gloom and sadness. Alas, daily experience proves the reverse. For under a sense of a crazy disordered body, under views of its approaching dissolution, the thoughts of its being shortly committed to the silent grave; who can put on an air of pleasure, joy and delight, except the christian? who such cause for continual felicity, as he that knows his lease is well nigh expired of his present house, that shortly it is to be pulled down; but yet, through the kindness and love of his heavenly Father, a free-grant of his eternal inheritance is given him, of a house not made with hands? what comfort must it yield him, to know, the nature of the purchase, the certainty of its being obtained, the price fully paid, the deeds signed and sealed, the conveyance legally made, his trustee Jesus, having actually taken possession; and more to have "the earnest of his inheritance in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him?" O the joy of this knowledge.

Vain and trifling is all that this perishing world has to offer, compared with the glory which shall shortly be revealed in us. Yea, not to be set in competition with the grace that is now upon us. And what can deprive such an heir of his inheritance? shall sin? no; that is fully atoned for by the blood of Jesus. Shall the world? no; he hath the victory over that by the faith of Jesus. Shall satan? no; the "God of peace will bruise satan under his feet shortly." Rom. 16. 20. Shall the corruptions of his nature and the workings of unbelief? these may distress and make him groan, may deject with doubts, but not dishonour. For unbelief also is included in that promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over any of the children of God, for they are under grace." Rom. 6. 14. and all such are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and are bound to give continual thanks to God the Father, who hath made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1. 12.

There is a house not made with hands,

Eternal and on high,

And here my spirit waiting stands

Till God shall bid it fly.

Shortly this prison of my clay

Must be dissolv'd and fall;

Then, O my soul, with joy obey

Thy heavenly Father's call.

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, &c.
Mal. 3. 16.

The tongue, though but a little member, yet is capable of being employed to the best services, or to the worst of purposes. The Spirit of truth hath assured us that he is a perfect man, who offends not in word. He is a man after God's own heart who prays daily, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." Psalm 19. 14. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." James 3. 13.

Thus perfection, real godliness, and true wisdom is ascribed to our words and conversation; and our Lord assures us, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. 12. 37. Most weighty considerations, that we take heed that we offend not with our tongue. But still, most encouraging assurance, our God and Father hearkens to the talk of his dear children—he hears them when they converse together about the things that concern his kingdom and glory, and their peace, edification, and holiness. Yea more, (O condescending love!) "a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name."

Seeing such kind notice is taken of the conversation of God-fearing, Jesus-loving disciples, what emulation ought we to be fired with, to stir up and provoke each other to love and good works? Shame to us; too often christians meet and talk with each other, and their poor hearts are neither warmed nor edified. But why is this? Because the end of their conversation was not remembered, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for-ever." Always most worthy to be uppermost in our hearts and tongues. This is the only fire to make cold hearts glow with love; and warm hearts burn with affection. The best news of the day, the fittest subject for conversation is the rich, free, sovereign grace of our God—the glad tidings of the gospel—the joyful news of salvation being finished by Jesus. This we are going fully to enjoy: What then should we talk of by the way but this? If the Lord hears, remembers and approves, most surely he will bless the spiritual and godly conversation of his children to each others mutual advantage. "Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ." Phil. 1. 27.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.
Hosea 2. 14.

Carnal ease begets spiritual sloth. Outward prosperity often brings leanness of soul. Worldly joys, vain pleasures, and sensual gratifications, are contrary to the spiritual delights, holy comforts, and godly conversation of the soul. Of this observation we have awful evidence! woeful experience proves it. It is seldom seen that the church of Christ in general, or individual members in particular, thrive and prosper in soul, when all without is easy, prosperous and joyful to the flesh. Like Jeshurun, we wax fat and kick, forsake God and lightly esteem the rock of our salvation, Deut. 32. 15.

But the head of his church, ever jealous for his glory, ever watchful over in love, will not suffer his members to perish with a surfeit from worldly kindness. They shall rather bleed by the loving stroke of his hand, than fall a sacrifice to the world and the flesh. Earthly plants droop and wither by too great heat from the sun. So spiritual plants hang their heads and decline under the warm sunshine of prosperity.

"But, saith the Lord, who delights in the spiritual prosperity of his people, I will allure them to myself: I will persuade of the evil of forsaking me the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns that will hold no water." The world, with all its gaudy shew and glittering vanities, I will persuade them from: and I will allure to myself, the fountain of real happiness, the source of solid comfort, the centre of all felicity. The Saviour, who was led into the wilderness to be tempted for the soul, will lead the soul into the wilderness to wean it from its carnal delights. In an afflicted, solitary, desolate wilderness, where nothing grows to please the flesh, but all is inksome and disagreeable to nature, O how doth God teach the soul the profitable lesson of consideration! former follies are reflected on with shame—past conduct is mourned over—the soul is brought again to thirst after God—Jesus and salvation becomes its cry again. O that it were with me as in months past! This is right. The Saviour loves to hear his members thus bemoaning themselves. Then is their ear open, and their heart attentive to his voice. And he will speak, not what she deserves, wrath, but comfortably [friendly] unto her, [unto her heart.] "Fear not, I am thy God, and thy great salvation."

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. Jer. 31. 34.

The outward teaching of the word is to be prized. A diligent attendance on gospel-preaching is by no means to be neglected. Faithful ministers of Jesus are to be esteemed highly in love for their works sake. Christian conversation is to be valued. None of these are spoken against by the Lord in this prophecy. No; the appointment of teachers by our Saviour, the Spirit's owning and blessing the word by instruments, to the teaching and conversion of souls, plainly prove the contrary. But Jesus, the substance, being come, the teaching by types and shadows, should be no more; the ministration of the Spirit should take place of the ministration of the letter. Such should be the effusion of the Spirit after the ascension of Jesus, that he should enlighten and teach with power and energy all the children of God. It is his office to glorify Jesus—to make him known to the soul. And every believer in him has this unction, this anointing of the holy one the Spirit, which teacheth him all things, 1 John 2. 20. Hence the babe in Christ, as well as the father, is taught by the same divine Lord—taught to know Jesus as the only and alone Saviour—taught the virtue of his precious blood, the perfection of his atonement, the glory of his righteousness, and the completeness of his salvation—taught to believe in his blessed name, and love his adorable person. O believer, in this absolute declaration, “they shall know me;” here lies thy mercy. Jehovah speaks with the voice of Omnipotence. The Lord effects by the power of his sovereignty. Therefore his grace proved effectual to thy calling, thy teaching. How vain, how fruitless, would all other teachers have proved? but the work is his; the comfort thine. Ever be concerned to reflect on the pride of thy nature, the obstinacy of thy will, the blindness of thy understanding, the desperate wickedness and unbelief of thy heart, and bow to his sovereignty, and give the Lord the Spirit all the glory for what thou knowest of Jesus as thy only hope and salvation.

We bless the prophet of the Lord
That comes with truth and grace:
Jesus, thy Spirit and thy word
Doth teach us in thy ways.

Hosanna to thy glorious name,
Who call'd us by thy grace;
Thy mercies lay a sov'reign claim
To our immortal praise.

Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9. 62.

The eye, though a little member, yet perhaps of all others is the greatest inlet to temptation. The first motion to sin entered by seeing. Eve saw the fruit was good and pleasant to the eye. Looking begat longing. So lust was conceived and brought forth sin, and sin when it was finished brought forth death. And when Satan dared to tempt Jesus, he begun the attack by presenting to his view the kingdoms of the world and the glories thereof. Seeing this, what reason is there, with Job, to make a covenant with our eyes; and, with David, to pray daily, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." No state more awful than to set out in the best cause, and to turn back to the worst enemy. The last end of such is dreadful. Most deplorable indeed, to turn away from following Jesus, and to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Whether he be minister or disciple, who hath put his hand to the gospel-plough, if his eyes are attracted to, and his heart allured after the dust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, these will render him unfit for the kingdom of God; for these are as contrary to the Spirit, frame and genius of Jesus and his kingdom, as heaven is to hell. No man can serve two such opposite masters. If thou hast chosen Jesus for thy portion and thy all, wherefore dost thou look back to the world? What slight and contempt doth such a conduct pour upon blessed Jesus! It is a sad evidence the heart is not whole with him. The conduct speaks loudly, as though there was somewhat desirable in him and his ways; but not enough to win the heart wholly, engage the affections intirely, and fill the mind with happiness completely. "If any man draw back, my soul, saith the Lord, shall have no pleasure in him." And verily such a soul can have no pleasure in God. Whither then will he fly? to what refuge betake himself in the hour of calamity, and in the day of distress? Oh! a forsaken Jesus, a slighted gospel, and neglected salvation, will wound the conscience with the keenest sting. "But, saith the apostle, of all the chosen members of Jesus, who abide in him and follow him in the regeneration, "beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Heb. 6. 9.

Search the scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and these are they which testify of me.
John 5. 39.

It was an excellent reply of a lady to a scoffing Infidel, who was venting profane banter upon the scriptures, and asked, What proof she could give of the truth of holy writ? ‘Yourself, Sir, said she, is one : for it is written, “There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.” 2 Pet. 3. 3. Even satan, when he tempted our Lord, though he dared to pervert, yet he never attempted to deny holy scripture to be the truths of God. Shame to professors who are ignorant of God’s word, though eternal life is revealed therein. Even devils, who have no hope from the scriptures, seem well versed in them. But may not Jonadab’s question to Amnon be put even to some of God’s children, “Why art thou, being a king’s son, lean from day to day?” 2 Sam. 13. 4. Leanness of soul comes on many through neglecting the nourishing truths of God’s word. It is the rich feast of the Father’s love. By it the soul is fed and nourished up to eternal life. Verily, when we lose our appetite for the scriptures, and they are not savoury food to us, it is because our souls are distempered.

“They testify of Me,” saith Jesus. Is not that word enough? what so sweetly, so powerfully engaging to the soul as when somewhat of the dear Saviour is to be learned from every page. The more we are acquainted with his precious person, his amazing love, his wonderful humility, his astonishing sufferings, his finished work on earth, so much the more will he be endeared to our hearts, and we shall prize the word that testifies of him, and the Spirit that glorifies him ; we shall think of him, love him, live upon him, live to him, long to be with him ; so we shall beguile all our troubles and trials below : our hearts will be simple and happy ; and our conversation and conduct more like the meek Lamb of God ; so shall we grow as Pharaoh’s “kine, fat fleshed and well-favoured, while we feed in God’s meadow.” Gen. 41. 18. If we neglect the scriptures, that testify of Jesus, no marvel if we enjoy not the comfort of the Spirit’s witness of Jesus. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, [to this blessed end] that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.” Rom. 15. 4.

Great God ! mine eyes with pleasure
look
On the dear volume of thy book ;
There my Redeemer’s face I see,
And read his name who dy’d for me.

Let the false raptures of the mind,
Be lost and vanish in the wind :
Here I can fix my hope secure ;
This is the word and must endure.

But ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Heb. 12. 24.

When, from zeal and affection for their beloved Master, the disciples would have called for fire from heaven, "Jesus rebuked them, saying, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.' In young disciples there is often much heat of zeal that is not according to knowledge. They know but little what evils they are called from, and what privileges they are come to. It behoves all to be diligent in reading, hearing, and studying the truths of Jesus. So the Spirit makes wise heads and joyful hearts. To see, taste, and feel somewhat of Jesus from the law, the types and figures, the prophecies, promises, and the gospel, is the chief concern of simple souls: so shall their hearts be daily more and more established in faith; and they shall know more assuredly that they are come to Jesus. When we read of Moses sprinkling the people, and crying out, 'Behold the blood of the covenant,' Exod. 24. 8. this comfortably reminds us of the pardon of sin by the precious blood of the dear Lamb, and how the sprinkling of this blood purifies the heart from sin, and the conscience from guilt by faith.

The acceptable sacrifice of Abel, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, brings to our minds the most excellent sacrifice of the life and death of our dear Saviour. This speaks righteousness, peace, love and salvation to our souls. This silences all guilty fears. This revives and comforts drooping, trembling hearts, knowing that Jesus is our dear and ever-loving Mediator before the throne. This gives boldness and confidence of free access to God. So we find liberty and freedom in our hearts to draw nigh to God, to love him and rejoice in him. Whatever our various cases, frames and circumstances are, our only wisdom and comfort lies in simply commending all to Jesus, knowing that we are come to him, and live by coming to him. Is sin our sorrow, grief and burden? Jesus has a plea for it; he does not extenuate or excuse it, nor should we ever do so, but own and confess it with all its aggravations; for his blood has a voice, it speaks before the throne: the Spirit of truth bears this blessed witness to it. O how full of the richest consolation! "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John 1. 9.

I call that legacy my own

Which Jesus did bequeath;

'Twas purchas'd with a dying groan,

And ratified in death.

Sweet is the mem'ry of his name,

Who blest us in his will;

And to his testament of love

Made his own life the seal.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. Gal. 4. 19.

Many sincere disciples, who are convinced of sin, their hope in themselves cut off, and have fled to Jesus as their only refuge, are often distressed in themselves, because they have not been under such dreadful terrors of legal wrath, which they hear others talk of, and which are mistaken for the pangs and travail of the new-birth. But there is no authority from scripture to conclude any person must have such great terrors, so deep a sense of hell and damnation ere he comes to Jesus, and believes on him. Nay, the law may work great wrath in the conscience, and yet the soul never be converted to Jesus and the holiness of the gospel. The holy Spirit is a sovereign agent. Enlightened, convinced souls, under his operations, are differently wrought upon herein. Some feel more, others less terrors: but each see the sinfulness of sin, their lost state by nature, the spirituality of the law, and the preciousness of Jesus, before they will come to him. Upon such the dear Saviour "sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." Isa. 53. 11. Zion, the church, in her living members, travails in faith and prayer; and by her, as the mother, children are brought forth, Isa. 66. 8. Ministers, in their painful labours and endeavours, travail that souls may be born to Jesus.

Thus, laborious and affectionate Paul travailed in birth again for the apostatizing Galatians. He had been in pain for them, till they were brought forth, at first, as a holy seed in their conversion to Jesus. But now, O how was his soul grieved at their turning back again to the law! Children of God, though little in knowledge, and weak in faith, are as dear to Jesus as the most grown and adult christians; so are they to his faithful ministers. But the Spirit will not leave such to abide in a feeble, infantile state. Ministers labour and travail for their growth in grace by the knowledge of Jesus. The gracious Spirit, by the word, forms Christ more perfectly in them. He increases a more perfect knowledge and understanding of his finished work and salvation for them, in the full atonement of his blood, the perfection of his righteousness, and the prevalency of his intercession for their justification and acceptance with God. And also in their sanctification, he forms Christ in them more perfectly in his image and likeness, both in the disposition of their hearts, and the conformity of their lives. Thus children, who are born of the Spirit of Jesus, are more and more conformed to their living Head in all things by the same Spirit.

Glory to God the Spirit give,
From whose almighty power

Our souls their heav'nly birth derive,
And bless the happy hour.

Jesus said unto him, Wherefore didst thou doubt?
Matt. 14. 31.

The best of men are but men at the best. The most eminent saints of God have experienced doubting fearful frames, as well as believing joyful ones: We have many instances of this in the bold and courageous Peter. We now consider him, at the command of his Master, walking safely on the surface of the great deep. Here he honoured his Master's word, and was very comfortable while he believed in his power. To see Peter walking upon the liquid ocean is not more beyond the power of reason to comprehend and account for, than to see a poor sinner "walk by faith, and live by faith on the Son of God" comfortably; in spite of all the raging waves of lust and corruption.

And as it was with Peter, so is it oft with the believer. The workings of Peter's natural senses—the suggestions of his reason opposed the actings of his faith—he heard the roaring winds—he saw the boisterous waves—he considers the bulky weight of his body—and reason assures him water cannot support him. Hence he doubts, he fears, he sinks. So the poor sinner, who hath heard the inviting voice of Jesus, and obeyed the word of his grace to believe on Him, walks sweetly and comfortably for a season; but anon corruption, like the surging wave, lifts its threatening head—temptation, like the stormy wind, blows violently upon him—the thundrings of a fiery law are heard—he thinks incensed justice pursues him, and that the face of Majesty looks stern upon him—he reasons upon what he is, what he has done, and what he may expect, and all nature, sense, and feeling is against him. O then he doubts in his mind and sinks in his spirits! But when he reflects Jesus is above all, he is mighty to save; then seeing all hope in him, and none beside him, he cries, "Lord save, or I perish." This is right. Our Saviour loves to hear his poor disciples cry to him. He is near; and they are always within the reach of his arm. He loves their persons—approves their crying; but reproofs their doubting. Wherefore didst thou doubt? Though thy sins have reached to heaven, yet my blood is before the throne. Who shall lay any thing to thy charge? It is God that justifieth; who shall condemn thee? I have died; what shall destroy thee, seeing I am able to save to the uttermost?

What tho' the host of death and hell,
All arm'd against me stood,
Why should their terrors shake my soul?
My refuge is my God.

A Friend and Helper so divine,
Does my weak courage raise;
He makes the glorious vict'ry mine,
And his shall be the praise.

Jesus saith, If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. John 13. 17.

Jesus is a prophet to teach, a priest to atone, and a king to reign, by love, in the hearts of his subjects. So a christian receives the Lord Jesus. And faith in him begets love to his doctrine, and obedience to his commands. Let no one call evangelical obedience legal bondage. For every precept that dropt from the mouth of Jesus, flows from love to us. When he saith, "Do this;" it is for thy happiness and good, O soul. "Avoid that;" love is careful of thee, "Do thyself no harm." This is pleasant to the renewed soul to hear, happiness to obey. Faith in Jesus makes all things possible. Love to Jesus makes all things easy. "His commandments are not grievous." To know them is our privilege. To do them is our happiness.

Say, O christian, is not this thy experience? Art thou not happy in doing the will of Jesus, who died for our sins? Art thou not happy in obeying Jesus, who hath made peace between God and thy soul by his blood on the cross? Art thou not joyful in glorifying thy Father who is in heaven, by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ? Verily in keeping thy commandments, O Lord, there is great reward; in grace, peace and happiness of soul now, and hereafter such shall hear that joyful sentence from our loving Saviour, our glorious King, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25. 34. Then shall the works of the righteous be owned and proclaimed by the judge. Here is the process; they are called to inherit the kingdom. Why? Because blessed of God the Father with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Hence the kingdom is prepared for them before the foundation of the world; and in consequence of being "blessed, they do his commandments that they may have a right, or privilege (according to free-grace grant) to the tree of life." Thus knowledge and practice is the very essence of christianity. Where Jesus is the life of the soul; this will be manifest in the love of the truth, and obedience to the commands of truth.

I hear thy word with love,
And I would fain obey:
Send thy good Spirit from above
To guide me lest I stray.

How perfect is thy word!
And all thy judgments just,

For ever sure thy promise, Lord,
Here I securely trust.

While of thy works I sing,
Thy glory to proclaim,
Accept the praise, my God and King,
In my Redeemer's name.

Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. Psalm 3. 2.

If David's enemies had said of him, He deserves no help from God, he would readily have owned this great truth. But as God's children are comforted by the truth, so the enemy of their souls advances error and lies, in order to harass and distress them. When he attacks their faith and comfort, he makes a bold impeachment of the love, faithfulness, and immutability of their God. "No help from me in God!" O my soul, canst thou listen to this suggestion? canst thou indulge such a thought one moment? Art thou a disciple beset with distress of soul, and surrounded with troubles and difficulties? art thou singing such a melancholy note? Selah, saith David: pause, consider this; lift up thy mind to attend, how dishonourable to thy God! how destructive to thy faith, thy peace, thy love, thy holiness is this? Know the voice of thine enemy. Hear the voice of thy God and Saviour. This word from him suits thy case, is adapted to thy circumstances, however distressing or desperate. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" What is added? perish in thine own undoings, take it for thy pains? No: but almighty love proclaims its own triumph; our Lord and Saviour saith, "But in me is thine help." Hosea 13. 9. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." And, when born again, he finds more enemies, and more troubles than ever. A sinful nature burdens him, corrupt lusts perplex him, satan tempts and accuses him, unbelief besets and dejects him; but most joyful truth, God is his dear Father, Jesus his precious Saviour, the holy Spirit his loving Comforter. And where should the poor sinner look? to whom should the exercised afflicted soul go? Happy for him, when, with David, he goes with child-like simplicity, and tells his sorrowful complaints to his Saviour, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me." O my God and Saviour, they say of my soul, "There is no help for me in thee." This is right; the Saviour loves to have it so.

Thus his members are driven from all hope and help from within and without. Then they honour him in faith and prayer. As when the little child is terrified and afrighted with lying stories, it flies to the arms of its father for safety, tells him of its fears, and then its little heart is at ease: So David found it; so his experienced heart cries out, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah." Thus, though a mournful complaint ushers in this Psalm, yet it concludes in the joy and triumph of faith. So saints shall always find, "though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning." Psalm. 39. 5.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom. 12. 1.

Just before our dear Saviour left his apostles on earth, he gave them this commission, "Preach the gospel:" Glad tidings of the everlasting love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus to poor sinners. By this truth, through the power of the Spirit, souls are brought to repentance, faith and salvation. And by the sweet force and constraining influence of the same truth believers are to be exhorted, animated, and stirred up, to glorify God in their souls and bodies which are his. This was the apostles practice. With what affection and love do they address the members of Jesus? The sound of wrath and terror, the thundrings of hell and damnation, are not used to soldiers in the camp of Jesus. No, they are under the command of LOVE. They obey the calls of MERCY. So St. Paul beseeches. So we delight to hear. And from the most powerful motive, "the mercies of God, we cheerfully obey, and present our bodies a living sacrifice," upon that altar which consecrates the gift: Even Jesus: Holy in him, acceptable through him unto God. We own it "our reasonable service." We are not our own. We acknowledge it our bounden duty. Christ hath bought us with the price of his own blood. Lord, give power to obey, and command what thou wilt. Consider, O christian, while thy poor soul was dead in trespasses and sins, thy body was a wretched slave to the drudgery of satan and thy vile lusts. Now a better Master demands its service. It is through God's mercies in Christ Jesus thy soul is quickened, and by the same mercies thou art required to yield thy body as a living sacrifice. It is now the temple of the Holy Ghost, therefore consecrated to holy purposes.

If David's heart was so struck with the distinguishing favour of being chosen a temporal king, so as joyfully to dance before the ark, 2 Sam. 6. 21. O consider our eternal mercies in Christ Jesus, being made kings and priests unto God. Exercise thy meditation daily, hourly on this. How should it affect our hearts with love, raise our spirits in triumph, inflame our affections with zeal for God and his glory! Our spiritual mercies are not common to all. The generality of the world know nothing of them, therefore they despise them. O study then to approve yourselves as the peculiar highly distinguished favourites of heaven; as the elect of God, be clothed with humility, and yet live as kings sons upon heavenly food, and act as kings sons, who dare not demean themselves by a practice beneath their dignity.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Matt. 5. 6.

To thirst after happiness is natural to man. To seek it from wrong objects is as natural. To desire to escape a hell of pain and misery, and to enjoy a place of ease and comfort, is equally natural. And if this may be called salvation, all men, sooner or later, are willing to be saved. An implacable enemy to God, his truth, holiness, and people, may wish to "die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his." This, man is capable of, as a rational intelligent being. And many persons seem very religious, and much in earnest in duties and performances, in order to be saved in this way. But to desire salvation from God in a way of righteousness, to hunger and thirst after Jesus, and his righteousness, the righteousness of God, the righteousness of faith, this is the peculiar wisdom of the just. The dead hunger not. Spiritual appetite is the property of new-born souls. But a natural man can as soon seek to fill his belly with the east-wind, or allay his thirst with the sun-beams, as do this.

To know ones-self to be a poor sinner, without inherent righteousness, to know and believe how and by whom it is to be obtained, and to hunger and thirst after it, this lies at the foundation of true godliness, this enters into the essence of the religion of Jesus. Such self-emptied, hungry and thirsty souls are blessed; for they shall be filled: Filled with the knowledge of righteousness, the love of righteousness, the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God. They shall be filled with the sweet sense of peace with God, the joyful knowledge of the pardon of their sins, and acceptance with God. In a way of righteousness they shall be filled with the holy graces of God's Spirit on earth, and with all the fulness of God in glory. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Isa. 54. 17. Sweet words of Jehovah Jesus to hungry souls. What delightful fellowship and intercourse subsists between faithful hearts and loving Jesus. All righteousness is of me: I have all fulness to bestow, saith the Mediator. I daily need it, I hunger and thirst after it, saith the humble, dependent soul. As verily as the righteous man Jesus wrought out righteousness for sinful man, all poor, needy, starving souls, who come to Jesus, shall be filled with the blessings of righteousness, for it is the delight of his soul "to fill the hungry with good things," while "he sends the rich empty away." Luke 1.

*There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them
that are in Christ Jesus.* Rom. 8. 1.

It is a sweet observation of Mr. Burkitt's, "this chapter (says he) is a summary of evangelical duty, and a magazine of christian comfort—it begins with no condemnation to believers, and ends with no separation from the love of God." It is natural for us to conceive, if we had never sinned there could be no condemnation against us; but that now, though we are sinners, and are naturally under the condemning sentence of God's holy law, that yet we should be freed from condemnation, this our carnal reason cannot conceive, and therefore opposes it. But it is God's truth, and it is the joy of faith. This unfolds the great mystery, we are one with Christ Jesus, considered in Christ, beloved in Christ, and chosen in Christ. This gloriously displays the attributes of God's justice and holiness, while a full and ample discharge from condemnation is obtained from his righteous law to all his members. Therefore that blessed name of Jesus is above every name to them, and in this and every other matter of salvation, to him every believer's knee will bow, and his heart confess Christ is all in all. Rich privilege to be in Christ Jesus! Unspeakable happiness to be freed from all condemnation! Blessed effects of covenant union with Christ! Joyful experience of the grace of faith in Jesus! To have such a knowledge of Jesus, and to pass such a judgment upon thy soul, O christian, which the scriptures hold forth, is just and right.

As to Jesus, how readest thou? "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Isa. 53. 6. "Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2. 24. "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust." 1 Pet. 3. 18. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He was made sin for us who knew no sin." Can we read this without singing a joyful triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8. 33, 34. Here are the glorious triumphs of faith. Thou art "carnal, sold under sin." Rom. 7. 14. In thy flesh dwelleth no good thing, though thou hast no reason for confidence in the flesh; yet always abundant cause to rejoice in Christ Jesus, for in him thou art viewed as righteous: in him freed from all condemnation. Thou art called, O believer, ever to rejoice in thy liberty—to evidence it, by walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Jer. 32. 40.

Fear is a blessing of the covenant of grace. Naturally the fear of God is not in our hearts; it is one black mark of an unregenerate person, he has no fear of God before his eyes. How awful! how deplorable is this! though the infinitely holy Lord has power to destroy both soul and body in hell, though his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, yet naturally we fear not the power of the Lord, nor dread his wrath; nor are we at all sensible of our danger. What wonder of love! what matter of thankfulness, that the Lord, by his Spirit, hath put his fear in thy heart, O christian! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So is it a grace the Father of love bestows on his children. It is perfectly consistent with the strongest faith, the most inflamed love, and the highest spiritual joy. Therefore, though by faith in Jesus we are delivered from a servile slavish fear of God, which fills us with legal terrors and a sense of wrath; yet we are possessed of a filial loving fear towards him, as a tender and affectionate Father.

This fear shall dwell in the hearts of saints all their days. The exercise of this fear keeps souls from sinning against the God of love. The blessed effect of it is, "that they shall never depart from me," saith the Lord. Thy soul, believer, being rooted and grounded in the truth as it is in Jesus, and the way of righteousness, life and salvation, through faith in his blood, by the holy Spirit, shall never depart from this good old way of the Lord into by-paths of human errors, and destructive ways of total apostacy and final unbelief. The Lord's fear shall preserve thee in the Lord's truth. Though thine enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil should surprise thee into sin against the Lord thy God, and draw thee from sweet communion with him; yet shalt thou fear to "lie down in thy shame, while confusion covers thee:" but shalt remember Jesus ever lives to save to the uttermost all sinners who come unto God by him. Thou shalt fear to seek to any other object but him; so shalt thou return, by faith and repentance, to him. "Happy is the man that feareth always." Prov. 28. 14.

Salvation is for ever nigh
The souls that fear and trust the Lord;
And grace, descending from on high,
Fresh hopes of glory shall afford.

Christ's righteousness is gone before,
To give us free access to God;
Our wand'ring feet shall stray no more,
But mark his steps, and keep the road.

For we who have believed do enter into rest. Heb. 4. 3.

Where Christ is known and believed on in the heart, ease and rest is enjoyed in the conscience. Therefore Jesus is esteemed a precious Saviour. And the operations of the Spirit prove that he is the comforter, by thus leading us to Christ. Hence faith and experience go hand in hand. There remaineth for the people of God a rest, perfect and uninterrupted in glory. We have the earnest of the inheritance of it on earth, by faith; and while we abide in Jesus, we enjoy rest. O who is able to conceive? who can describe the tumult of conscience, the distress of soul, under a feeling sense of sin and fear of wrath? None can, but the heart which knoweth its own bitterness. Who can express the sweet peace, the calm repose, of that soul, who finds rest in Jesus? It is a joy which a stranger intermeddles not with.

It was the appointment of God under the law, Deut. 24. 5. "when a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war for one year." It is sometimes the case with the children of faith, when they are first married to the Lamb, and have just entered into his rest. The sound of war is not heard in their camp for a season. Jesus keeps their souls in undisturbed repose. No enemy is suffered to annoy them. The sweet sound of the jubile trumpet hath proclaimed in their hearts full freedom and liberty from the guilt of sin, the bondage of the law, and the tyranny of satan. Hence they are apt to conclude their enemies are all dead, and they shall see war no more. But it is not so. Their enemies live and are mighty. Bless Jesus for rest. Fear not thine enemies. Know thou must continue in the militant state, whilst in the flesh. But here is the mystery of faith, to triumph in the victory of Jesus. Whilst all without, and much within are in arms against the soul; yea, though troubled, distressed, perplexed, on every side. Fightings without, fears within. Yet though there is no rest from any other quarter, yet it is the sweet privilege of disciples to rest in Jesus. Saith Paul to the dear children, "You who are troubled rest with us." 2 Thess. i. 7. Abide in Jesus, rest satisfied. Shortly your Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, to destroy all your enemies, and to make you for ever happy in his rest in glory. Disciple, indulge not a murmuring thought against thy Sovereign. Expect no rest any where but in him. If the world smiles, it is pleasing to the flesh, but it often proves a snare to the soul. Therefore saith thy ever-loving Jesus, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" that is his legacy. Here is thy rich, thy never-failing portion, "In me you shall have peace." John 16. 33.

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Isa. 28. 16.

A day is coming when every man's work shall be tried. The foundation of the Lord stands sure. But every other foundation shall be destroyed. He who is built on Jesus, and derives all his hopes of life and salvation from him, is safe in time, and secure to all eternity. Before men begin to build, they draw a plan; and every wise builder looks carefully to the foundation, for on this depends the safety of the superstructure.

The plan of salvation was drawn in the eternal council. It is founded in the love of the Father, effected by the obedience and sufferings of the Son Jesus. Hence what was contrived in infinite Wisdom above, is laid as a foundation in the church below, by the love and power of the Spirit the comforter. It is his peculiar office to lay this foundation in Zion, and to manifest and make known to the prophets and apostles, teachers and saints, that Jesus is the only foundation. As a stone, for strength. A tried stone, approved of by the Father, and by his children in all ages. A precious corner-stone. The ornament and beauty, as well as strength and security of the whole church. Precious is Jesus in all his offices to them that believe. A sure foundation. Sure to all the seed. Certain to all the purposes of their salvation. And as the Lord the Spirit lays this foundation in the church, in the truth of doctrine; so also in the faith and experience of redeemed souls.

What the word speaks of Jesus, that they prove and find him to be. This is their mercy. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Such is his serenity and composure of mind, that he shall not be frightened, in times of distress and calamity, to quit his confidence in Jesus—he shall not be ashamed of his hope in the Lord. Being well satisfied that Jesus reigns, and that the government of his church is upon his shoulders, and the residue of the Spirit is with him; he will patiently wait, and quietly hope for the fulfilment of every promise. Sin and Satan shall not overcome the believer in life. In the awful article of death he shall not be afraid, because his heart standeth fast believing in the Lord. And when Jesus his friend appears, he shall stand forth with boldness; and shall find an abundant entrance into the presence of God and the Lamb, to live, and love, and reign, in glory for ever and ever.

O for a strong and lasting faith

To credit what th' Almighty saith,

To build upon God's only Son,

And call his righteousness my own.

But the Comforter who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14. 26.

Our blessed Lord here gives his disciples the clearest discovery of the ever-glorious three persons, in covenant for the salvation of lost sinners. In the knowledge of this lies all our hope. From the belief of this springs all our comfort. In the love of this our heaven is begun upon earth. For the knowledge, belief and love of this truth in our hearts, we are wholly indebted to the Comforter. He teaches all things, not by any new lights or fresh revelations, which he bestows on any man: But he graciously instructs our minds, and comforts our hearts, by the same light of truth and love, which beamed forth in the beginning in the first promise; and which shone brighter and brighter in prophecies, types and shadows of the covenant, until the substance, Jesus, was come; then the canon of revealed truth was completed by the apostles under the teaching of the holy Spirit: the substance of which is, the things which Jesus spake, did and suffered, on our account, as our substitute, and for our salvation.

It is the peculiar office of the Spirit to glorify Jesus, and to sanctify our souls. This he doth by the word of truth: Teaching our minds of the Father's electing love, as centering in Jesus, and directing our eyes to him, as made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Let no man deceive us with expectations of any revelations from heaven, of new truths to comfort us, but ever say, with Paul, "though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Gal. 1. 8. Let us prize and study God's word, for in and by that the Spirit teacheth and comforteth our minds. In everlasting love, and the most ancient truth he establisheth us. We are poor sinners from day to day. We feel many things in and around us to deject and distress us. When we remember what sin hath done to us, brought upon us, and what it exposeth us to, and our poor hearts are in fears and doubts, what will become of us: O then the blessed Comforter brings to our minds and consciences the transcendently rich love of Jesus, what he undertook, spoke and did in life, and suffered in death, and still lives to plead in our behalf before the throne. O the heart-felt joy of this! So he relieves our minds and refreshes our spirits, through the faith of Jesus, in the knowledge and love of the truth. So he teaches us self-despair; animates us with courage to go on in the path of holiness, and fortifies our minds to withstand all that is against us. "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephes. 4. 33.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. Rom. 8. 12.

Christianity teaches us, to owe no man any thing. He is a prudent man who keeps his accounts clear, and knows to whom he is indebted. He is a grateful man, who acknowledges favours with just sentiments. If this is necessary and commendable in the oeconomy of this short life: how much more so in things of a spiritual and eternal nature? how wise, how just is it to render to all their dues? if we are debtors to the flesh let us serve that; but if we are debtors to the Lord, it is then our duty and privilege to serve him. What owest thou, O christian, to the flesh? verily neither suit nor service.

But alas! thou hast obeyed its sinful motions, gratified the corrupt lusts thereof, and what hast thou reaped for it but shame and sorrow? This is the fruit that sin and folly bears. The flesh, with its corruptions and lusts, is at enmity to thy God, and at war against thy soul. Willingly to give place to such an enemy, to fulfil the lusts, and live after the sinful desires of the flesh, will most assuredly weaken thy confidence in Jesus and bring death upon thy peace and comfort. Yea, if ye live after the flesh ye shall die. The Lord strengthen us daily to deny its demands, and to mortify its lusts; for we are not debtors to the flesh; but to the spirit; debtors in an immense sum of love and gratitude. Time can never discharge it. With inexpressible joy and delight we shall ever be paying this debt through a never-ending eternity.

The gospel of the grace of God is no licentious doctrine. It sets at liberty it is true, but it is from the most galling yoke, and most servile drudgery to sin and lusts; but yet it binds the soul in the sweetest bonds of grateful service and loving obedience to Jesus the best of masters. For what owest thou to the Spirit, O christian? write upon thy heart, even all my present peace, all my future hopes. For he it is who convinced thee of sin, revealed to thee the love of God in Christ, gave thee power to believe on Jesus, grace to repent. He fills thee with joy and peace in believing, bears witness with thy spirit, and assures of thine adoption to be a child of God; and it is through his influence only thou art able to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to love thy God and Saviour, and live to his glory. And canst thou deliberately grieve the Spirit, this blessed inhabitant, this loving comforter, by yielding service to thy inbred enemy? O with what fire of indignation against lust, with what warmth of affection to his God doth Joseph cry out, under the solicitations of a strong temptation, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against the best of masters? against my own soul? no, but against my most kind, most loving and eternal friend, the Lord my God? Gen. 39. 9.

As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 5. 21.

Sin, like some mighty conqueror, hath obtained a victory over the whole human race. All men are naturally under and well pleased with its reign and government. But sovereign almighty grace dethrones this usurping monarch in the hearts of the elect, triumphs over its spoils and conquests; delivers their poor captive souls from its dominion, and reverseth the sentence of death they were under. And all this is effected in a just and righteous way. For though salvation is all of grace to poor sinners; yet eternal life is a just debt, due to the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. He hath a right to challenge it from the hands of justice. And he doth so in his prayer, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." John 17. 24.

To think of doing something to procure the favour of God, and merit a title to eternal life, this we are prompted to from the pride of our natures, and unbelief of our hearts. But such notions ever oppose the gospel of grace, resist the Spirit of truth, degrade the glory of Jesus, depreciate the perfection of his finished work, and make the God of truth a liar. But thou, O believer, art not saved without a perfect righteousness in obedience to the law of God. And, through faith in Jesus, thou hast a just challenge and humble claim founded upon his righteousness to eternal life. O the rich triumphs of abounding love! how glorious is the victory of sovereign grace! Soul, thou must sink into nothing at its discovery; yet rise into a glorified subject from the knowledge and experience of it. From the inexhaustible fulness of Jesus we receive grace for grace; and this by the faith of the operation of God the Spirit. Whilst thou, O sinner, destitute of righteousness in thyself, art worthy of death, yet enjoying the sweet comfort of the reigning power of grace, how ought it to be the daily study of thy heart, the constant and steady practice of thy life, to give all the glory where only it is justly due? To the Father, for everlasting love; to the Son, for everlasting righteousness; and to the Spirit, for everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. And the more thou art enabled to live upon the divine truth and faithfulness of the covenant, as revealed in the word, and shining with such lustre in the person of Jesus, thou wilt become dead to every hope but him; out of conceit with all righteousness but his, and thou wilt be singing in triumph with the church, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robe of righteousness." Isa. 61. 10.

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Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.
 1 Pet. 5. 7.

We are now called to confess Jesus in a day of mildness. The fury and rage of persecution is restrained. Bonds and imprisonments do not await us. Yet we must not think to be exempt from trials and difficulties of various kinds. The adversary is not dead. Nature's lusts and corruptions are alive, and daily fighting against us. The love of Jesus is ever accompanied with the world's hatred. Disciples of Jesus are not meer stoics. They will feel the exercise of these things more or less. Sometimes it may be their lot, like the disciples, to be in the midst of a sea of troubles; tossed with the waves of difficulties; and the wind of providence seems contrary to them; and to the eye of nature and sense, Jesus seems asleep to their sorrows, as though he intermits in his kind love to them, and tender care over them. Here is the trial of faith. But this grace never consults nature and appearances: it looks through all to the everlasting love and almighty power of Jesus: knowing he can save from the uttermost depth of distress to the uttermost height of comfort.

So triumphs the church under all her tribulations, "I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Micah 7. 7, 8. Sweet confession of faith, under very discouraging views. But while the Lord cares for us what can harm us? and while we cast our every care on him, we obey his will, honour his word, and reap from the heavenly plant the blessed fruit of heart-ease. How composed did the three children of faith stand before the wrathful monarch? how easy their minds under the dreadful threatening of a fiery furnace! how calm their reply! "O king, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter!" the Lord careth for us. We cast all our care upon him. Judge then of Jesus' care for sinners by his love to them. Ever remember, while we were enemies, his blood atoned for our sins. Can we believe his love to us, and doubt of his care for us? O how unreasonable is unbelief! nay, but if we had no corruptions to conflict with, no troubles to exercise us, no burdens to bow us down, no cares to beset us, no fears to attend us, great part of God's word would be useless; but as we are not to expect total freedom from these things, the exhortations of the word are suited to our state, and direct to a loving Friend, whom we are to believe and honour by obeying his kind invitations: Under every distress Jesus saith, "Come unto me." Matt. 11. 28.

 The Printer begs the reader to excuse an error; namely, in the next page read OCT. 2. and the error continues to OCT. 16.

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. John 14. 20.

“To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the sun.” Eccles. 3. 1. “God hath made every thing beautiful in its time,” so the Spirit of inspiration teacheth by the royal preacher, Eccles. 3. 11. “In the beginning of time God created all things by Jesus Christ; in the fulness of time, the Son of God was made flesh; dwelt among us for a time; and at the end of it finished salvation for lost guilty sinners. His glorious work of redemption is ended upon earth. But the man Jesus ever lives in glory, and therefore his members must be made spiritually alive upon earth. To him they must all be gathered. There is a day of grace appointed them. A time, a set time to favour them. Psalm 110. 3. A day of power, wherein they are made willing to come to Jesus, and choose him for their only Saviour: And trust in him as their only hope and their all. But “all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” 1 Cor. 12. 11. Various are the spiritual statures of God’s children. Different are their degrees of light, faith, knowledge and love. As in the creation of nature, in the first day’s work light was produced, perhaps small and glimmering; but that glorious luminary the sun, was not ’till the fourth day. So is it in the spiritual new creation of the souls. Our Lord’s first disciples, though they had light enough to see him as the true Messiah, and to come to him, and follow him; yet it is amazing to read how often they appeared dark and confused in their minds about many things which concerned his person, sufferings and kingdom. It is just the same now. Many are his sincere disciples; but are very weak in faith; know very little of the grace and comforts of his kingdom; are often sadly perplexed and harassed in their minds with doubts and fears. Still they cleave to Jesus. They love to hear of his precious name and glorious salvation. Their hearts can be satisfied with nothing else. Hence it is plain the light hath shined, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon them: But they must follow on to know the Lord. There shall be a day of Pentecost, a day of meridian light, wherein they shall know even as they are known—assuredly know that there is a mutual indwelling of “Christ in them, and they in Christ; and the Spirit will bear witness to their spirits, that they are the children of God, Rom. 8. 16.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance for ever. Isa. 32. 17.

The light of this day assures us the sun is risen upon the earth. That is not a more evident truth in nature, than this is in reason; that innocence, once lost, can never be regained by all that sinful man can do. Consequently no peace can subsist between a holy righteous God and guilty, unrighteous man. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But who are the wicked? All who, through unbelief, reject the truth as it is in Jesus. It is the essence of wickedness to oppose a righteous God, to set themselves against the righteousness of Jesus, and go about to establish their own righteousness, and not submit to the righteousness of God. Hence their conscience is defiled with guilt, their hearts impure, and their lives unholy. Yet pride blinds their eyes, and self-righteousness deludes their hearts with a false peace. For as there is but one atonement for sin, the precious blood-shedding of Jesus; so there is but one righteousness, even the perfect righteousness of Jesus, by which sinners are made righteous. God imputes no other. His law is honoured by no other. The scriptures reveal no other. Faith receives no other. The Spirit bears witness to no other. Sinners have no other in which they enjoy peace with God. But viewing and possessing the work of Jesus through faith, their minds feel and enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding.

There are many things, from a sinful nature, satan and the law, which tend to disquiet their minds daily. But this is the blessed effect of Jesus' righteousness; it brings ease and tranquility to the mind. This comforting thought, I am righteous. My Father hath brought forth, and put on me the best robe, which Jesus my elder brother wrought out for me. This quiets my mind. I am easy and satisfied. I can seek no better righteousness. I dare trust in no other. And this righteousness is presented with the clearest evidence, the strongest confidence, the fullest assurance. The triumphs of Jesus' resurrection proclaim its acceptance with God. The Spirit testifies of it in the word, and gives assurance of salvation by it in the hearts of the faithful. Hence the holy boldness and happy rejoicing of faith before a righteous God. David's address to Jesus is, "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day. I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Psalm 71. 15, 16. As there is but one faith, so saints in all ages had but one object to look to for righteousness, even Jesus. Therefore holy Paul prays, "that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." Phil. 3. 9.

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient : all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 1 Cor. 6. 12.

The constraints of love and the jealousy of fear sweetly unite in the believing heart. Where the faith of Jesus prevails, love constrains. It holds and keeps us in our station and duty, as soldiers are kept together under a banner or ensign displayed. What cheerfulness and activity of soul do we experience, when we find, and feel, and say, with the church in the Canticles, chap. 2. 4. " his (Jesus') banner over me was love." Then how sweet do we judge and determine our conduct by the law of Christ, which is love ? This excites a holy jealousy, a godly fear, lest we should allow ourselves a latitude in things in themselves indifferent, to the wounding and hurt of our brethren and fellow-soldiers. Though all things of an indifferent nature, which are innocent in themselves, are lawful to us ; yet the cause and interest of our dear Saviour, and the good and edifying of his beloved members, should (being ever near our hearts) make us reflect on the expediency of them.

How narrow is the path of duty ! yet is it pleasant to the faithful soul. For Jesus hath strewed it with the fragrant fruits of peace, love and glory. Peace from God, and with our brethren. Love to God and one another. While we walk according to this rule, we bring glory to God who hath called us by Jesus Christ to glory ; and who will also assuredly glorify us together with himself.

What care and circumspection becomes disciples in their daily walk, that they give none offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the church of God ; the eyes, not only of God, angels, and devils are upon us ; but the eyes of men also, our brethren and our opposers. Did the Rechabites wholly abstain from wine, because Jonadab, their father, commanded them, saying, Ye shall drink no wine ? Did the Lord honour their obedience in this indifferent thing with his approbation ? Jer. 35. How much more will Jesus honour his disciples, who, with an eye to his glory, and his members good, abstain from things that are not expedient ? Thou free-man of the Lord, with a holy resolution, assert thy dignity. I will not be brought under the power of any thing contrary to the love of Jesus. Happy is he who seeketh not to please himself, but to profit others. " Happy is he that condemneth not himself, in that which he alloweth." Rom. 14. 22.

And there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 1 Kings 19. 13.

The prophets, as well as the children of the Lord, are sometimes found where they ought not to be. Elijah had now taken up his residence in a cave in the wilderness. What work could he do for his master here? what glory could he bring to his name in a barren mountain? here were no lambs of God's flock to be gathered: no sheep of Christ's pasture to be fed: no torn sheep to be healed and nourished by his word and doctrine. It seems, as though he thought all his work was at an end; his zeal quite worn out; and in a fit of fear, unbelief and despondency he retreated from public opposition, to the dreary mansions of a mountaneous cave, for rest and quiet. But the Lord followed him: Caused him to hear his voice: Calls him to new work: Endues him with fresh strength: And animates him with the pleasing assurance, that he had seven thousand faithful servants yet in Israel.

See the effect of judging according to appearances. Carnal reason is a bad judge in spiritual things. The wisdom of the flesh ever determines contrary to the wisdom of God. Beware of your frames, O disciple. If on the mount, in the sunshine of comfort be not vain and confident, with "I shall never fall." If in the gloomy valley, where light and joy is obscured; be not cast down and dejected. "The Lord reigneth. Rejoice in him." Though clouds and darkness are round thy God and Saviour, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Psalm 97. Above all, beware of thy conduct. Fly not to places of sinful vanities, and vain gratifications. These can never profit thy soul. Nay, if dark and uncomfortable, what canst thou expect but to be darker still? this is a farther remove from the Saviour's love and presence. What canst thou expect, but this cutting reproof; this keen interrogation, "thou man of God, what dost thou here?" If Elijah was reproved for being in a barren wilderness, how canst thou answer it to God, thy loving Saviour, for being found on worse than barren ground; where the alluring baits, the poisonous weeds of satan grow in abundance to beguile and destroy unfatigable souls. O soul, hear the call of thy beloved Lord, "Depart ye, depart ye, this is not your rest." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you: and I will be a Father unto you, [ye shall enjoy the sweet knowledge of it] and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18.

*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth
so easily beset us. Heb. 12. 1.*

Christian, thou art called to run a race. The eyes of innumerable spectators are upon thee; and the powers of many enemies against thee. But fear not. In the strength of Jesus, through the power of faith, thou shalt obtain the prize, even the salvation of thy soul. It is thy wisdom to know thy foes, and to guard against them. To know thine own vileness and insufficiency, and to look to thy friend for succour and assistance. Thou hast a heavy burden, which will hinder thy running with alacrity and delight, and which in the exercise of faith thou must lay aside; therefore put off the old man with his deeds.

This through the Spirit is to be thy daily work. Every sin is a weight, and as such is to be laid aside. The body of sin is a fore burden, therefore to be put off. But thou hast a besetting sin. Thine own conscience best knows its name and nature. This thou art called to lay aside. But in the nature of all men, there is one sin, a master sin, the source and spring of every other sin, which believers are not exempt from, but it is ready at all times easily to beset them. It is that monster of iniquity, unbelief. As "faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11. 1. and we see what glory is given to God, and what wonders were wrought by faith from that chapter. So it is the nature of unbelief, to deny the subsistence of what is hoped for, and oppose the evidence of invisible realities. It tends to make faint hearts, weak knees, and feeble hands. It stops us in our race. It puts us to a stand. And we should give up all, and give over all, unless Jesus had prayed for us; and we are endued with power from on high. Yet shame to thee, O soul, instead of laying aside this sin, how often dost thou treat it as a bosom friend? Consult with it as a sweet counsellor? especially when its arguments are backed by its constant companion, carnal reason. But as the matter of thy faith is the word of truth, the author and finisher of thy faith Jesus, thou art not called to answer every cavil from carnal reason, nor to silence unbelief by explaining the mysteries of grace and salvation, but to lay it aside and to run with patience the race that is set before thee, looking unto Jesus.

By glimm'ring hopes, and gloomy fears,	See the kind angels at the gates,
We trace the sacred road;	Inviting us to come!
Thro' dismal deeps and dang'rous snares,	There Jesus the forerunner waits,
We make our way to God,	To welcome travellers home.

That I may know him. Phil. 3. 10.

“ There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four—the fire which saith not, it is enough.” Prov. 30. 15, 16. So true is this of the fire of love, when kindled in believing hearts. It burns with insatiable desire towards Jesus. Amazing! Had Paul known, loved, and preached a crucified, risen Jesus so long, and yet now desires to know him? Yes. Such is the mystery of faith, that like riches to a miser, the more they increase, the more the desires of his heart increase after them. His wants are greater than his possessions. So the living members of precious Jesus see such inexhaustible treasures in him their living head, and such numerous wants in themselves, that their hearts are ever crying after, looking to, and longing for more of his presence, blessings and comforts, in knowledge and experience. And like a chaste virgin espoused to an affectionate lover, her desires will never be completely satisfied, till she is brought into the nearest relation and closest embraces, and till she takes up her abode, and enjoys the presence of the object of her love. Lovers of Jesus are never satisfied with any other but him, nor will they be fully satisfied, nor perfectly happy, till they are ever present with their ever-loving Lord.

But the knowledge of him, even now, creates a paradise of peace, a heaven of love, and holiness in the soul. Hence there is a godly jealousy in espoused souls, lest other objects should steal upon their affections; and if at any time their eyes have been turned from their Lord, there is a holy shame, they blush at their folly, and cry, O that I may know him, who rests in his love, to me a poor sinner. In this consists the life and joy of the heart, to know that Jesus hath made peace for us by the blood of his cross: that he hath wrought out a robe of righteousness by the obedience of his life, to adorn us; that he ever lives to pray for us; yea, daily, constantly to know him, as dwelling in my heart by faith, ever present with me, to the joy of my mind, and the peace of my conscience. And truly, beloved, if thou art not thus kept knowing Jesus, looking to Jesus, feeding upon him continually in thy heart by faith, thou wilt know and feel other things, which will sadly distress thy mind. The voice of the law will be heard in thy conscience, backed by Satan's injections, and thou wilt find anguish of spirit, and bitterness of soul. But by sweetly abiding in the knowledge of Jesus, by faith, thou shalt manfully stand thy ground, and courageously conquer and triumph. “ So shall grace and peace be multiplied, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” 2 Pet. 1. 2.

Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. Rom. 14. 22.

Though there may be many things of a civil, moral and religious nature, which are in themselves indifferent; yet as to a compliance or non-compliance with them, they are far from being matters of indifference to the mind of a believer: as he has an inward consciousness of his outward behaviour, so he finds within himself a sentence of condemnation, when he acts contrary to the dictates of his own knowledge and conscience. It may be the disciple of Jesus oft finds some things of a doubtful nature, wherein he doth not see the word of God is exprefs and clear in determining. The upright soul, the tender conscience knows not how to act; is afraid of doing wrong. He asks advice of ministers and christian brethren; but they cannot fully satisfy his scruples, and set his mind at liberty, how he ought to demean himself.

Here the apostle gives a full and peremptory answer. The heart of every believer is purified from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus; and instructed in the knowledge of the truth by his word and Spirit. Hence there is an inward perception of what tends to wound and condemn it. Happy art thou, disciple, if thou dost not wilfully allow thyself in any thing, for which thy conscience condemns thee: Allow thyself in no outward practice which is attended with inward condemnation. Is it of a trifling and indifferent nature in itself? Pretend not to plead for it. Canst thou be content to make thy conscience thine enemy, to incur its censure, and to impair thy peace for a trifle? Whatever thou takest in hand, remember the end and thou shalt not do amiss. This advice is excellent. It is thy wisdom to follow it. It is thy privilege to plead for power at a throne of grace. Consider daily thy calling. It is to live in sweet fellowship with Jesus, and to enjoy his peace in thy conscience, it is to holiness and happiness. Whatever is contrary to this, will make thee unhappy. As a son of the most high God, and a servant of the precious Jesus, thou art called not to please thy flesh; not to do thy own will, not to gratify thy own lusts; yea, not to destroy thy own peace, but to glorify thy God and Saviour in doing his will. It is most plain and evident from the apostles exhortations, that if believers walk and practice is not consistent with the truth, they may most certainly deprive themselves of the sweet sense and comfortable enjoyment of the peace and love of God. "KEEP yourselves in the love of God." Jude 21. "LET the peace of God rule in you hearts." Col. 3. 15.

God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. 2. Theff. 2. 13.

It is thy lot, O disciple, to live in a day, when pride reigns, the creature is exalted, the Holy Ghost is resisted, and truth is trampled under foot. The doctrine of God's sovereign distinguishing grace, and electing love in Christ Jesus, is now, as it ever was to men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, a bone of contention. They have railing accusations, great swelling words, to utter against it; their mouths are not stopped, because they see not themselves guilty before God. Rom. 3. 19. "Not to believe the truth, is, saith Paul, to have pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Theff. 2. 12. And then he adds, but we are bound to give thanks for God's electing love towards you brethren, beloved of the Lord. True ministers of Jesus join with blessed apostles, in giving praise and glory to God the Father, for his love to poor sinners in Christ Jesus. They know it had an existence before time began. They behold every discovery which the word of God makes of salvation by Christ, as a fresh display of the everlasting love and infinite wisdom of the covenant of Jehovah.

The doctrine of election is not a meer speculation, nor can it tend to licentiousness; but is of the essence of vital godliness, and is attended with the most holy and blessed effects, where it is received into the heart in the love of it. For the same Lord, who promised to bring many sons to glory, hath also ordained the means, sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. How could Paul? how could any of the apostles know these professors of old were beloved and elected? Truly, the effects proved the cause. They saw the fruits of electing love spring forth under the energy of the blessed Spirit. They believed in, loved, and cleaved to, the Lord Jesus, who is THE TRUTH. This was evident by the sanctifying influence it had upon their lives and conversations.

"Behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," saith the Father of all consolations to his church, concerning Jesus. Isa. 42. 1. He is the blessed object in whom thou art chosen, and who has finished thy salvation, and to whom thou art to look by faith. Yet, O believer, trace the streams of thy mercy to the fountain head, see thy obligations, equally to the Father's love, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's operations. Thus all salvation is of God. Thou hast nothing whereof to glory. All cause for deepest humility, and the greatest reason for triumph and rejoicing day by day. What heights of love art thou called to? what inflamed affections should possess thy heart! "Only let thy conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." Phil. 1. 27.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2. 12.

The salvation of the precious souls of poor sinners is all of grace. It hath its foundation in the everlasting love of God. It is secured in the covenant of grace. When the suffering, sin atoning Jesus, with his expiring breath, said, IT IS FINISHED, then law and justice received full satisfaction. Hence glory is secured to God in the highest; and man, who is the happy subject of this salvation, is now favoured with experience of the good-will of his triune God. The redeemed ones, who are effectually called and quickened by the power of the Holy Spirit, as being made alive to God, are exhorted, by the word of his grace, to WORK out their own salvation.

Believer, thou art called with a holy calling, thou art to walk worthy of it, in the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope. Herein thou art to be exercised daily. Faith worketh by love in striving against sin, in resisting the devil, in mortifying thy lusts, in perfecting holiness, being fruitful in good works. It is thine own salvation thou art to be working out. In the clear knowledge, and certain assurance of it, lies thy present peace, comfort, and joy. In all outward duties be diligent. Be much in prayer, meditation, and searching the scriptures, and in all holy ordinances: Herein work while it is called to-day: the love of thy Saviour calls thee to it. The commands of thy God make it thy duty: the gospel requires it. Love constrains to it. Verily in, though not for, thy obedience, thou shalt be blessed. But do all this with fear and trembling. FEAR to think of establishing thy works and duties as thine own righteousness, or to procure the favour of thy God. TREMBLE to entertain any hope of salvation, but by the atoning blood of Jesus shed for thy sins; the perfect righteousness of Jesus, wrought out for thy justification; any way of access to God, but through his mediation. Fear and tremble, above all, after thou hast done all, to think I am PERFECT. Know thou art still an unprofitable servant. Tremble to entertain the least notion that thy might, thy power, thy faithfulness, hath wrought any thing, as terms and conditions, to procure salvation. But ever remember, it is God who worketh in thee, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his doing." James 1. 25.

N n 2

The fearful soul that tires and faints, Is but esteem'd almost a saint;
And walks the ways of God no more, O may I make my calling sure.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matt. 5. 16.

Can a lump of animated clay, a worm of the earth, a creature of a day, glorify the infinitely great and eternally glorious Jehovah? Yes. Such honour, such exalted honour, have all his saints. For his pleasure, they were created at first: for his glory they are born again of his Spirit. Jesus commands his members to it as their duty: the Spirit enables to it as their greatest privilege. "The Father accepts, and is well pleased with it, and declares himself glorified, by the practice of his children." Psalm 50. 23. Did Samuel consent to Saul's request, "Honour me now, I pray thee, before thy elders of my people?" 1 Sam. 15. 30. And canst thou, O Son of the most high, ever need a motive, or want an argument, to glorify thy Father before men? Can we ever be ignorant of the nature of it? It is to be the chief work of thy life; and in this work, as Moses said to Pharaoh, so thy deliverer saith to thee, "not an hoof is to be left behind:" thou art to bring every thing out of Egypt, to serve and glorify the Lord thy God. Thou hast but one thing only, but what thou hast received from the Lord: this is sin. By this thou dishonourest thy God. By every thing contrary to this, God is glorified. Happy souls, who study God's word as the rule of their conduct, direct all their views to his glory, and consider the enjoyment of God in Christ as their greatest felicity. Thus the light of Jesus, which hath shined into the heart, beams forth its evidence and glory, in the outward life, and conversation. When the light of doctrine is accompanied by the warmth of love and the obedience of faith, men will see that we have been with Jesus. That we not only have light in our heads, but love and zeal for God's glory in our hearts. The former may acquire honour to ourselves of being good TALKERS for God; but the latter only can prove that we are upright WALKERS as his obedient children—that we are really concerned for his glory—that we have it at heart—that we love, not only in word, but also in deed and in truth. It is the genuine language of a converted soul, with Paul, to say to Jesus, "Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?" it is the burden of a faithful loving heart that it doth so little for the glory of God, and ever longs to glorify him more. While the light of truth is our glory, and the love of truth is our happiness, we shall study how to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Titus 2. 10.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Ephes. 4. 30.

How affectionate and condescending is the address of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ to his church and children? Paul writes to Philemon, Though I might be bold to enjoin thee that which is convenient; yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee. So with infinitely higher authority, the Lord might command with terror, instead of beseech with love. Astonishing expression! grieve not the holy Spirit of God. Hast thou? canst thou, O believer, be guilty in this matter? it is easy to conceive that we may grieve our own spirits; and the spirits of good men by our sin and folly; but to think of grieving the Spirit of God is enough to make us cry out in amazement, What mystery of love is this!

But verily, so dear are God's children to him, that as in love to our souls he took on him our nature, so in condescension to our weak finite capacities he borrows language from nature, and assumes to himself passions like unto ourselves. He was in all things like unto us but without sin. So it is said God delights in the prosperity of his people, he rejoiceth over them to do them good. But when through their sin and folly, they hurt and injure their poor souls, Jesus is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, his Spirit is grieved at our conduct. Who can tell, in how many ways christians offend herein? Inwardly chiefly by unbelief, by low, unworthy, thoughts of Jesus' his blood, righteousness and salvation, his mediation and intercession, of whom the Spirit is glorified: as well as by the indulgence of vain, carnal, sinful thoughts. Outwardly, by neglecting the gospel of grace, not walking closely and agreeably to the rules of faith, which the holy Spirit hath therein laid down, for the conformity of our lives and conversations. And experience wofully convinceth, that when the holy Spirit is grieved, the poor soul is distressed. For he is the Comforter, it is by him believers are sealed unto the day of redemption. But if he hides away his face, we are troubled. Though we are sealed by him, as the Lord's own possession, yet if we are left to our natural thoughts, the view of Jesus is obscured to us, and the knowledge of this is withheld from us. Then natural fears and legal terrors seize upon us; and the evil spirits rejoice against us. What reason have we to pray daily, Cleanse thy servant, O Jesus, from his secretest faults. And let not, O Spirit of grace, presumptuous sins get the dominion over me, Psalm 19. 13.

The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
Flies from the realms of noise and strife;

Why shou'd we vex and grieve his love,
Who leads our souls to heavenly life?

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. 10, 5.

It is fit, that faithful, loving, obedient soldiers of Jesus, should sometimes have the sentence of death in themselves; for they are hereby taught not to trust in themselves. Though armed with the spiritual weapons of their warfare, yet they are no farther mighty and conquering, but as aided by the power of the omnipotent Spirit. Poor souls by trusting to their graces, instead of confiding in the God of all grace, have been foiled by the enemy, and have fallen. "I will not trust in my bow for strength, neither in my sword for victory to save me, but through the Lord, will we push down our enemies, through thy name will we tread down them that rise up against us." Psalm 44. 5. This is the language of faith. This the confidence of humble souls. After believers have escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust, and have been turned from their sinful courses to the Lord Jesus; then danger threatens from another quarter; self-righteousness will exalt its baneful head against them. Now I am somebody. "I have received inherent grace and strength, I am justified, my sins are pardoned, and I have got a clean heart." Thus towering imaginations swell against God's everlasting love, his election of grace, the imputed righteousness of Jesus, and final perseverance of the saints. When these evangelical truths are rejected and denied, it argues that pride, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness prevail. Verily, O soul, thou trustest in thine own beauty, and playest the harlot, because of thy renown. Wo, wo unto thee, saith the Lord God, how weak is thine heart, seeing thou doest these things?" This is a severe reproof from the mouth of the Lord. Ezek. 16. 30. God will suffer no flesh to glory in his presence. All knowledge of God and Christ is revealed in the word of truth. Where these truths are tried at the bar of carnal reason, they will be rejected, but as these truths are precious to that Spirit who indited them, so he will bring disciples of Jesus to submit to them. To reject the doctrines of grace, under a specious pretence to holiness, is to blaspheme the God of wisdom. High thoughts of ourselves oppose the truths of God. Vain imaginations strengthen in self-confidence, which is contrary to the faith of Christ. To see Jesus all in all, and to see ourselves nothing at all, is to see and know aright, in the light of truth, and by the views of the Spirit of truth. There is an inward obedience of the heart, a submission to the righteousness of God, as well as an outward obedient walk. Indeed there may be much of the pride and holiness of the pharisee without, where there is none of the simple faith and love of Jesus within.

[Saieth Jesus,] *I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword.*
 Matt. 10. 34.

Is not our Saviour the prince of peace? hath he not made peace between God and man by the blood of his cross? doth he not give peace in the conscience, and establish peace among his people? and is it not the very essence of the gospel to preach peace by Christ? Surely all this is true. How then doth my Lord say, "I came not to send peace, but a sword?" Conceive not of the meek Lamb, as though his soul delighted in war, and that the sword of slaughter should be drunk with human blood. No: he came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them. Therefore this sword is no other than the "sword of the Spirit, the word of God;" as it is rendered in St. Luke, DIVISION. This sword divides and separates a christian from his carnal friends and dearest relations; yea divides asunder flesh and Spirit. Hence open war commences, and hostilities begin; and there never, never can be any peace, harmony and agreement subsisting between carnal and spiritual men, no more than there can be between flesh and spirit in the christian. These are contrary to, and at continual war with each other. But "wars and fightings, saith James, come from your lusts." Sin is the cause of all contention, discord and division amongst men. Every christian is a soldier. The sword of the Spirit, the word of God is a blessed part of his armour. By this he is enabled to resist satan, to subdue his lusts, to cut down unbelief, and to stand his ground against every enemy from the world, flesh and devil, which are always set in battle array against him.

Thus the weapons of thy warfare, O soul, are not carnal: No: but spiritual and mighty, through God, "to the pulling down the strong holds of satan." Though earth and hell are at war against thee, yet strengthen thou thyself in thy God: he is on thy side. Fortify thyself by the word of his truth, which, for thy comfort, assures thee, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that riseth up in judgment against thee, thou shalt condemn." Isa. 54. 6. By "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, thou shalt prevail: by the blood of the Lamb thou shalt overcome." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. 4. 6. Alas! the poor sensible soul is ready to say, My strength is small, my arm is weak; though such a weapon is put into my hand, I have neither skill nor courage to use it aright; sin, satan, and the world will be too strong for and overcome me at last. No; that is impossible. Though weak as infancy, and as feeble as childhood, that blessed word exactly suits our state, and is a cordial to our spirits, Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them." Why so? Because "grater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." 1 John 4. 4.

Jesus said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Luke 22. 46.

The dull, sleepy frames of disciples, though natural to them, are by no means commendable in them. Nor are they to find excuses for them; as though this was a sleepy state of the churches. They are injurious to the honour of our dear master; bring discredit upon his cause and interest; are very uncomfortable, and expose unwary souls to many and great dangers. Though love may excuse it, yet will Jesus sharply reprove for it. Why sleep ye? wherefore do you indulge yourselves with sloth, when you are called to activity? sleep is unreasonable, when danger is near. Yea know, my beloved disciples, your adversary, satan, is ever wakeful, watchful, busy, in plotting, and seeking to rob you of your shield of faith. Is this a time to be sluggish? to fold your hands and cry, a little more carnal ease and worldly pleasures, a little more spiritual slumber? most inexcusable to be taking sleepy opiates of pleasure to indulge the flesh, and an intoxicating draught from the world, to drown the spirit. What meanest thou, Oh sleeper? arise and call upon thy God. Say not, "I am in an unsuitable frame, dull and heavy." Thou readeest of no such reply from these drowsy disciples to their master. Wilt thou stay till thou art rich, before thou wilt be industrious? He who calls to duty is both able and willing to give strength in duty, and power to perform it. Take with you words and say; Jesus will give the Spirit to pray. When we are out of the reach of danger, prayer will be needless. But when will that be? not in this life, not till every enemy is destroyed; that will not be, till death is swallowed up in life.

Now there is danger from temptation. Temptation cannot hurt us, but entering into the temptation will. Jesus was, in all things, tempted like as we are, yet without sin. His temptations were all without him. They could not enter in to defile him; but they may us. When the love of the world enters and prevails, the sense of the love of God is lost. When the lusts of the flesh get power, the consolations of the Spirit are not enjoyed. When ease and happiness are expected from any other object, but Jesus, the precious Saviour is slighted and disesteemed. The views of his love are eclipsed, and the soul miserably darkened. "The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." 1 Peter 4. 7.

With joy we meditate the grace
Of our high priest above;

His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love.

I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.
 Psalm 119. 162.

The saints of God in all ages were taught by the same Spirit, looked for the same salvation, and were comforted by the same truths, which they found in the word of the Lord. Hence the WORD is so precious to them, as it causes rejoicing of soul within them. This is the case of the written word, which was spoken by the mouth of the Lord, and makes known the everlasting loving designs of his heart to sinners of mankind; and also of the essential, divine, and uncreated WORD the Lord Jesus; who in person manifested God's thoughts of love, as words declare what is in the mind. Jesus lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and he has shewed us his eternal love.

If a conqueror, who hath obtained a complete victory and is enriching himself with the spoil of a wealthy conquered enemy, has cause of rejoicing; how much more has the christian from the word of the Lord? Alas! the joy of the one is but momentary and uncertain. What he hath gained in war to-day, to-morrow he may be deprived of: But the joy and triumph through the victory of Jesus, and the spoil the christian reaps from the word, are durable and eternal. In the written word of the holy Spirit are given unto him "exceeding great and precious promises." In the essential Word Jesus "all the promises are in him, yea and amen, to the glory of God." By the former, through the Spirit of wisdom, he understands "what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." By the latter, by union with Jesus, and through faith in him, he obtains the happy knowledge that all things are his: "Whether ministers, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. And that "nothing shall be able to separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8. 19.

Blessed be God for the word of his grace, the bible. Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift, Jesus. Here is thy treasure, O christian, where should thy heart be, but in meditation and delight herein daily? For thou canst get spiritual joy from no object but Jesus, as set before thee in the gospel, as the Saviour of the lost and guilty; and the clearer thou seest salvation by him, so will thy faith be stronger in him, which will create spiritual joy and rejoicing of soul continually.

How doth thy word my heart engage!
 How well employ my tongue!
 And in my tiresome pilgrimage
 Yields me a heav'nly song.

When nature sinks and spirits droop,
 Thy promises of grace
 Are pillows to support my hope;
 And there I write thy praise.

Sin shall not have dominion over you : for you are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. 6. 14.

What a heart-reviving promise is this ! how delightful to believers to hear a God of truth and faithfulness absolutely declaring your worst foe, your bitterest enemy shall not lord it over you ? The strong man armed is cast out, and the staff of his power broken in the soul. Art thou, O disciple of the Lamb, ready to cry out, Would to God sin had no being in me, then I should be completely happy ! Remember what thy Saviour said to his mother, " Mine hour is not yet come." John 2. 4. It is enough that thou art called to the marriage of the Lamb. The Bridegroom keeps the best wine for the last. This is excellent wine on earth, that sin shall not have dominion over us. In glory sin shall have no being in us.

But whilst thou art in the body, sin will have life and being in thee : and, as an enemy to thy soul's peace, may often distress and harass thee, but shall never destroy thee. Be assured, O christian, thine enemies are all conquered ; though sense and experience afford thee daily proof they are not all dead. No, no ; never think of laying down thine arms, and folding thine hands and setting up thy rest here. Thou art still in the camp. The enemy lies in wait to take all advantage. But here is thy victory, thou art not under the law, which gives the knowledge of sin, but no strength against it nor power over it ; but under grace. Thou art not called to resist and fight against sin in thine own strength ; but, through the efficacious power of the Spirit, thou shalt obtain daily victory. Though sin is an enemy, whose life is commensurate with the life of thy flesh, and so nearly allied to thee that it is part of thyself, yet being one with Jesus, thou hast a spiritual and eternal life, and the power of Omnipotence is engaged to preserve and keep thee ; therefore sin shall not maintain its usurpation, nor hold dominion over the soul. Its empire is dethroned, and the kingdom of Jesus is set up in the heart ; he dwells there by faith. The heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience by his blood. He who hath conquered for thee, will also conquer in thee.

Take heed of getting into a state of independence on him, and a vain confidence in thyself ; as though the root and being of sin was rooted up, and thyself in a sinless state. Then thou hast no farther need of Jesus, faith in him, hope on him, nor prayer to him. O, if satan thus rocks any poor sinner asleep, it is in the cradle of delusion, while he sings a sweet Siren's song. But thou art ever to be active and vigilant by all means to oppose and conquer thy inbred foe. And as one made alive from the dead by Jesus Christ, daily attend this wholsom advice, " Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." ver. 12.

Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. 2 Cor. 5. 9.

"In all labour there is profit." Prov. 14. 23. The belief of this maketh the heart diligent, lively and active. When Nehemiah was stirred up to build the wall of Jerusalem, amidst the scoffs and opposition of enemies on every side; yet, in prayer, watching, and working, he and his brethren wrought with one hand, a guard in the other, and the confidence of faith in their hearts, "Our God shall fight for us." This animated them, so they laboured till the work was finished. Nehem. 4. 20.

Thus the beloved brethren of Jesus are called to be "stedfast, unmoveable; always abounding in the work of the Lord;" Being confident that the Lord fights for them, and "knowing assuredly, that their labour is not in vain in the Lord." The labour of love is pleasant, it is profitable to the believing heart. The work of faith is delightful to the soul; while it exercises the patience of hope. Most reviving consideration! we serve not a hard task-master—we labour not for a rigorous severe Lord, nor from base mercenary principles. No; every command of Jesus is in love: Every work we do in his name, is from love to our spiritual good, as well as his glory. We have the fullest assurance that we are accepted in the beloved; and are not left to doubt of the way of acceptance, nor to do any thing to procure it. The truth as it is in Jesus forbids all this. But knowing our persons are accepted in Jesus, this is the most enlivening powerful motive, not only to do, but also to abound in those things, with which God is well pleased. To study how to please him in our walk and way, and cheerfully to lay out ourselves in God's service—to make a cheerful unreserved surrender of ourselves wholly to the Lord: O this is the sweet exercise of faith and love. Shall we pretend to believe that Jesus is our Saviour, and that we are accepted in him, and yet not labour and strive that our works may please him; or not study and endeavour, as assisted by his Spirit, to avoid those things that are contrary to his nature and commands? Alas! this is "hail Master," only to give a kiss of hypocrisy; while faith in him and love to him are wanting.

Thou disciple of Jesus, from that moment thou didst enter into the rest of Jesus by faith, thou art called to labour, that thy works may please God, and be accepted of him. And when the heart is thus whole with its Saviour, and simply looking to him, need one forbid such a one to refrain from the vain pastimes and sinful gratifications of a carnal world? No; he saith these things do not please my Lord—they cannot be acceptable to him—they shall not ensnare me—I cannot displease my Saviour. "We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4. 19.

And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. Exod. 33. 19.

Carnal reason, pride and unbelief, like a threefold cord, bind the soul under legal bondage. Each of these mutually strengthens the other; and all combine together to oppose the sovereign goodness, grace and mercy of our Lord. Instead of listening to, believing in and being comforted by the free grace declarations from the mouth of our God, how apt are we to consult with flesh and blood?

Marvel not, believer, though thou findest the pride of thy flesh rise and rebel against distinguishing grace and discriminating love. This, though sweet to the experience of faith, is bitter to the stomach of rebellious nature. But here is thy mercy, Grace, which is sovereign in its nature, is saving in its operations, and all must be resolved into this humbling acknowledgement. "I, a poor sinner, who could neither will nor run the way of salvation, the Lord wills to shew me his goodness, to proclaim his name, to bestow his grace and shew me mercy in Christ Jesus, to the salvation of my precious soul."

Thus the Lord speaks in love, let all his children hear in faith, rejoice and be humbled. Where, O soul, canst thou fix thy foot, but thou wilt find thou standest upon the ground of free-grace? Hast thou the grace of faith? Dost thou find pardon of sin and consolation of soul in Christ Jesus? Dost thou "love God? It is because he has first loved thee." Dost thou hate sin, as contrary to the honour of thy God, and the peace of thy soul? What marvellous mercy! what astonishing grace is this! Consider it on thy knees, reflect on it with meltings of soul! Why shouldst thou be singled out by the power of the word, marked by the hand of the Spirit, for salvation, when many hundreds perish everlastingly? Why are thine eyes opened amidst a throng of blind sinners? Why art thou watered like Gideon's fleece, while others are dry? Was thy nature better? thy desires holier? What conditions hadst thou performed to procure this. Alas, grace has taught thy soul otherwise than so to think. All must be resolved into this soul-humbling, God-exalting truth. "He will be gracious to whom he will be gracious." Here is an inexhaustible source of comfort. This a never-failing motive to love and obedience: that the grace and mercy, for which God is indebted to no one sinner on earth. He has freely given it to thee, it is thy privilege to rejoice in it, thy duty to confess it, and to lie in the dust and be humble. "If by grace, it is no more of works." Rom. 11. 6.

This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Acts 1. 11,

The parting of dear friends is very grievous and affecting; but sorrow is greatly alleviated from an expectation of meeting again. O the joy of meeting our dear friends in glory who have gone before! but what will heighten all, will be the sight and enjoyment of our dearest and best friend and Saviour. The disciples of Jesus were looking stedfastly to heaven after their dear Master, who was now ascending to glory, when they received this assurance. They saw his human form, the same dear man, their beloved Companion, with whom they had so often conversed, eat and drank, and taken sweet counsel with, and who was lately crucified, dead and buried. This very Man Jesus they saw ascend. Though the Son of God came from heaven in spirit, yet he assumed a body of flesh and blood, and lived in it on earth: and having "finished the work his Father gave him to do, he took the same body with him to glory; and the same Jesus shall so come again in like manner." Every eye shall see him in the last day in his human form.

Thus in all the transactions of Jesus, by faith, we "behold the man." If we view him in his birth, we see an outcast babe in poverty. If in advanced years of life, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, despised and rejected of men." If in death, he died as another man; yea an accursed death as a malefactor. Such was thy Saviour, believer, a man like unto thyself in all things, but without sin. And having perfectly expiated and atoned for all our sins, he is now at the right hand of God, the glorified man, still in human form pleading our cause; "and he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession." Heb. 7. 25. Who can tell the uttermost of Jesus' salvation? It is unto all manner of perfection both of soul and body. How sweet and encouraging is this to faith, that our Saviour, our brother, our friend is in our nature before the throne? "He ever lives; he is able to save." And canst thou ever doubt of his love and willingness? O remember Calvary! think of his agony and blood-shedding there. And canst thou want a proof of his love, poor sinner? If thou, whilst an enemy, was redeemed and reconciled to God by his blood; how much more, being reconciled, shalt thou be saved by his life? It is thy happiness to be ever looking upon, and unto Jesus as the Man and Mediator by whom thou comest to God. And be looking for him, to see him in his glorification: "He shall come again in like manner," in the same flesh, the same human nature to receive the reward of all his toils and sorrows, in the embracing and receiving all his redeemed-ones to his own glory.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.
James 4. 8.

How sweetly is the childrens duty and the father's promise joined together? the latter is a most powerful encouragement to the former. Though we were sometime afar off, "yet being made nigh by the blood of Jesus," we are exhorted to draw nigh to God in prayer, and that in full assurance of faith; firmly believing that "faithful is he that hath promised" he will draw nigh to us to bless us. To live near to God is our heaven below—to experience a distance from him is our misery.

Observe, O christian, the more pleasure and delight thou findest in sensible objects, be they what they will, thou wilt be sure to feel that they have drawn thee in thy frame and experience of soul, to a sad distance from thy God. Happy, only happy canst thou be while thou art daily concerned to live in close communion and near fellowship with thy God and Saviour. While the terrors of the law drive legal spirits to duty, to fulfil terms of peace and conditions of acceptance; evangelical promises should ever sweetly constrain and encourage to every duty, those who "are not under the law, but under grace. To live in neglect of our duty and God's ordinances, is devilish licentiousness: but to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, is truly christian liberty. Here is our mercy, we have a sure way of access by Jesus; we draw nigh, in him God and man meet. The holy Spirit is our strength, "praying in the Holy Ghost." As it is the office of Christ to intercede for us, so the Holy Ghost intercedes in us. He is an Advocate within us; enables us to plead in faith what Jesus is to us—what he hath done for us; so we speak with confidence to our dear Father: He helps in prayer as a nurse helpeth a little child that is unable to go of itself; or as a weak decrepit person is upheld by the arm.

Here is our encouragement, the word of promise, "God will draw nigh to you." This, O soul, is thy happiness below, thy heaven on earth, to have the God of mercies, the Father of all consolations draw nigh to thee. Thou sweetly findest it so. Not merely to draw nigh to duty, but to God in duty. To find and feel the special presence and blessing of the Lord. Without this, loving hearts cannot be satisfied. Communion and fellowship with God, finding nearness of spirit, delightful intercourse, having to do with God, and receiving inward peace and love from him, O, this is the glory of the life of faith on Jesus! and this draws us away from and makes us dead to all things beside. When God and Christ and heaven is within, all without becomes truly mean and despicable in comparison. "It is good for me, saith Asaph, to draw near to God." Psalm 73. 28.

I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal. 2. 20.

The state of a christian is a seeming paradox. No marvel, the things of God are foolishness to natural men, and that we are accounted fools for Christ by them ; for the truths of God, as well as the life of his children, appear to be absurdity and contradiction to them. But " the life of Jesus is made manifest in our flesh." 2 Cor. 4. 11. Hence he saith, " If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Matt. 16. 24. Deny the PRIDE of his own righteousness, the corrupt LUSTS of sinful flesh, and own me as his life, and follow me as his Lord in the regeneration. In this crucifixion of nature, this death to every hope but Jesus, this life of faith on him, consist the peace, love, holiness and joy of our souls. It springs from love, excites to love, and is nourished by love ; so we enjoy heaven below. Thus is heaven above insured to us.

Blessed life ! happy believer ! to feel Christ living in thee, to live on him by faith. Envy you, ye sons of folly and vanity ? we do not : Join with you in your carnal delights, we cannot : joys infinitely superior are ours. Pity you we do. Nor with you, ye sons of the bond-woman, can we live on our works and duties, derive life from terms we fulfil, or conditions we perform ; as though for so much works we earn so much wages. Our God owes us nothing ; yet he gave his Son freely, " that we might live through him." The beloved Son of God himself is our life, our all. Though wretched, guilty, damnable creatures by nature and practice, yet astonishing grace ! " he loved us, and gave himself for us." Of this we are bold and confident. This truth bears the divine impress. The Lord hath confirmed it with an oath. Here to admit the least doubt, is base and unreasonable. The life of faith springs from truth itself, and is as contrary to doubting, as it is to sensuality : yet, while in the flesh, it will be opposed by both. But is every believer in Jesus assured with Paul, " Christ loved me, and gave himself for me ? No : though this knowledge is essential to the comfort of our souls, yet not to the being of faith in the heart ; nor is it the object of faith ; yet it is the joyful privilege of every believer, and as such is earnestly to be coveted, and all diligence given to attain it. We are loved with the same love ; saved by the same truth ; the same faith given us by the same Spirit which Paul had, and to the same end to make us holy and happy. And the Comforter, who testifies of Jesus in the word, will, sooner or later, also bear witness to the heart, and fill the soul with the fruits of faith, and the joy of assurance : and every faithful abiding soul in the Lamb, shall say, " The Spirit itself beareth witness with my Spirit, that I am a child of God." Rom. 8. 16.

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man.
Matt. 26. 27.

Self-righteous hearts are ready to think, It would have been better to have concealed such abominable wicked conduct as Peter fell into. No; the Spirit of wisdom hereby stains the glory of all flesh, and exalts the superabounding-riches of Jesus' grace over the aboundings of sin; and shews, in the history of Peter's denying his loving Saviour, what human nature is, and into what shocking depths of sin a believer may fall when left to the workings of carnal nature and the buffetings of the enemy. Dreadful to think of, most earnestly to be prayed against; while on the other hand we see the affectionate heart of Jesus is ever towards his wounded fallen members. Love is within, and by a look of love, how suddenly, how effectually doth Jesus raise and restore such! Three denials of Jesus; each attended with higher aggravations; though deserving a look of wrath and a frown into hell, yet were followed with a look from Jesus, which brake Peter's heart into affection, and melted his very soul into love. Amazing grace! astonishing kindness! Let no disciple think, I am not in danger of falling after the same example of unbelief; for every one is.

And if any poor Lamb of Jesus' flock is fallen, and has been worried and torn by the wolf, let him not say, That his loving Shepherd has cast him off for ever, and has no more care for him or love to him. What will the true Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep, and bought every one of them with his own blood, will he suffer the enemy to rob him of his property, and destroy any one of his purchased-ones? No, verily, that can never be while Jesus is mighty to save: that can never come to pass till Jesus ceaseth to love; and he can as soon cease to exist; for Jesus is God, and GOD IS LOVE. 1 John 4. 16. O how oft are our poor souls hurt and wounded, though not in denying Jesus to a fellow-creature with oaths and curses, yet too oft are we ashamed to confess his dear person, his precious cause, his despised cross? Yea, and when we entertain hard unloving thoughts of our Saviour, from the working of unbelief in the heart, this naturally tends to deny Jesus in his office and character; leads to depreciate and think too meanly of his salvation, his blood, righteousness and intercession, and faithfulness to his charge and people: And hence we encourage guilty fears—our views of his love are clouded—a sense of it in the heart grows cold—and the influence of it on the life is benumbed. Is not this in effect to say, "I know not the man?" Such are the workings of nature and unbelief. O how little do we consider of what he hath done, and is doing for us! But we have too mean and contracted views of Jesus at best, and such at times, that we are ashamed of, when we are enabled clearly to view "Christ in us our hope of glory." Col. 1. 27.

Remember Lot's wife. Luke 17. 32.

It may do a disciple much good, it can do him no harm to call to mind the judgments of his God. Hence he may learn to be more wise and wary from others harms. If he sees professors fall away, it may teach him to take heed: it may lay him low in humility at the feet of Jesus, and excite gratitude and love in his heart, and make him cry out in astonishment, 'Glory to grace! how am I kept!' If is well, O believer, that thou shouldst ever remember thou standest by faith, therefore "be not high-minded, but fear:" fear to look back, with a wishful eye, to the sinful vanities of a carnal world. The wife of righteous Lot did this, and she was made a monument of God's judgment against disobedience. Doubtless this was a great grief and affliction to her husband.

Remember, O christian, thou art yet in the flesh, which, like Lot's wife, is part of thyself. Therefore, hence thou art in danger. The lustings of the flesh after the world, if indulged, will certainly bring upon thee leanness of soul, grief of spirit, a death to the comforts, and deprivation of the joys of thy soul. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." The eye is a great inlet to temptation. Looking begets longing. Saints have wofully experienced this. So David fell into the gross sins of adultery and murder. He first saw the object with delight, then he longed after enjoyment. "And lust being conceived, brought forth sin, and sin, when it was finished, brought forth death." O the awful breach this made in the peace of his soul, and enjoyment of his God for a long season! Thou, O believer, art called to look: an object is set before thee. Here looking may beget love and longing without danger of hurt; yea with the greatest certainty of good to thy soul. Therefore be ever looking to Jesus: remember him; so wilt thou, with Paul, be "forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing toward the mark of the prize of thy high calling in HIM. Thou hast escaped for thy life. It is the command of thy God in love to thy soul, "Look not behind thee."

Our sins, alas! how strong they be?
And like a violent sea
They break our duty, Lord, to thee,
And hurry us away.

The waves of trouble, how thy rise!
How loud the tempests rore!

But death shall land our weary souls
Safe on the heav'nly shore.

There we shall sit, and sing, and tell
The wonders of thy grace,
Till heav'nly raptures fire our hearts,
And smile in ev'ry face.

How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh of God only?

John 5. 44.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare," Prov. 29. 25. and is a great enemy to the power of faith in the heart. The esteem of man, to be well spoken of, to have honour and applause from them, is pleasing to the flesh; but this often proves hurtful to the spirit. The wisdom and learning of natural men, is contrary to the simplicity that is in Christ, incompatible with the cross of Christ, and withstands an open confession of him who is an honour to us, for by the faith of Jesus we are honoured of the Father to be his children, and to enjoy sweet fellowship and communion with him in our spirits.

Here is the blessedness of the faith of disciples, "It standeth not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." 1 Cor. 2. 5. Hence we are to "call no man Rabbi, for one is our Master, even Jesus." But how are poor sinners distressed, and rent and torn by divisions and difference of judgments which so much abound? But have we not the plain, simple teachings of our blessed prophet to look to? O, but how often do disciples of Jesus give honour to men, in expecting that teaching, and that comfort from them which cometh from God only! Too oft is it the cry, I will hear what such a one saith, what this and the other teacheth, instead of "I will hear what the Lord God will speak," what he hath taught in his word. I will abide by that only. This honour cometh from God only, to speak peace by Jesus Christ outwardly in his word, and inwardly by his Spirit. Therefore we are to search the word diligently; wait for the Spirit patiently; treasure up and ponder upon the sayings of Jesus in our hearts continually. This is to honour him whom the Father honours to be the prophet of his church.

Believers have an "unction from the Holy One that teacheth them all things." 1 John 2. 20. What have they to do with human teachings, of those who know not the truth? "Them that honour me, I will honour, saith the Lord." 1 Sam. 2. 3. Jehovah commands us, "Hear my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Matt. 3. 17.

In the face of all opposition, to believe the word, the promises, and the oath of the Lord concerning salvation by his Son Jesus only, this is the honour the Lord requires from his children: And this obedience of faith God will honour with inward peace and the witness of his Spirit; with a life of love, and the sanctifying renewings of the Holy Ghost from day to day. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; let him be your fear, and your dread: Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isa. 2. 22.

Knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. Col.

3. 24.

Saving knowledge is accompanied with humility, productive of love to Jesus, and delight in his service. To desire to know more of the truth, in order to gain greater measures of love, and more cheerful conformity to him, this is praise-worthy. "For who so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1. 25. Christian, thou art not called to dream over dry disquisitions, and subtle refinements, merely to fill thy brain with nice speculations, but to have thy heart warmed with love, thy practice influenced to obedience, as well as thy judgment established in truth. Remember thy calling; study thy reward; glory in being a servant of Jesus: His work is pleasant—his service is perfect freedom—his wages are infinitely great—reward in thy work—reward for thy work—and an eternal inheritance when thy short days work is ended. And all of grace.

Shall the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season; the vile drudgery of satan, which is miserable bondage; the alluring smiles of a perishing world; shall these be placed in competition with the service of Jesus? "Knowing that we serve the Lord Christ." O how does this sweeten our duty, and make every path delightful! Canst thou hesitate one moment when the question is, Choose you this day whom you will serve? No; verily thou canst not, if so be thou hast tasted of the infinitely rich grace of the eternally precious Christ. Hath he bought us with his blood? redeemed us to God? wrought out a righteousness to clothe and adorn us? and shall our conduct be contrary to our profession? our practice not conformable to our judgment? or our walk inconsistent with our faith? Where then is the proof that we serve the Lord Christ? What evidence that we know the Lord, or expect the reward of his inheritance? We may well cry out, woe to our wretched sinful nature, which is contrary to Jesus, and is ever opposing his truth, ways, and love. Shame to us, we love him no more, nor serve him no better. Blessed be Jesus for the gift of the Spirit. O that through his sanctifying and sin-mortifying operations we may be in love wholly devoted to his service, who in mercy wholly devoted himself for our salvation.

How strong thine arm is, mighty Lord!

Who would not fear thy name!

Jesus, how sweet thy graces are!

We love and serve the Lamb,

He has done more than Moses did,

Our Prophet and our King;

From bonds of hell he freed our souls,

Taught us to love and sing.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. John 1. 17.

It is natural to us all to say of the moral law, as the king of Israel said of that faithful prophet of the Lord Micajah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." 1 Kings 22. 8. It is true, the pure, holy, spiritual law of God can yield no comfort, hope, or peace to any poor sinner of mankind. Yet the believer in Jesus cannot hate the moral law; it is a transcript of the divine mind and will: it is God's good gift, and it answers very valuable ends and purposes to the souls of his children. We know sin by the law, as we know Christ by the gospel. Though the law was given by Moses, a meek prophet, yet it is full of fiery wrath and ministers condemnation, denounces curses, yea eternal death and damnation to every transgressor. Yet why, O soul, shouldst thou hate the law? it is not the cause of all these evils, but thy sins, thy violations of its holy, just and righteous precepts. Here it is, thy hatred, here it is just. Believer, the law is thy friend while it shews thee thy duty—it cuts thee off from all legal hopes—it raises every false foundation—every expectation from thy own righteousness and goodness. The trumpet sounds its alarm louder and louder. The voice of words is shriller and shriller, and it will ever be terrible in its sound, except whilst thou art under the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

Here, O here behold, see and admire the transcendent excellence of Jesus, full of grace and truth. Grace, even the free favour of God to sinners, came by Jesus Christ. Truth, in every accomplishment of the ceremonial, in perfect fulfilment of every righteous demand which the moral law could exact. Here is thy wisdom, in the exercise of faith to oppose the life and death of Jesus to every righteous demand, to every severe threatening, and dreadful curse of the law. As he is thy husband, all debts, dues and demands he hath satisfied. Jesus came to this end, "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it." Matt. 5. 17. The same spirit, that shews the poor sinner the purity and spirituality of the law, glorifies Jesus; shews the soul that his blood hath fully atoned the guilt of sin, his righteousness hath magnified the law and made it honourable. Therefore when by faith thou art enabled to plead this before the throne, and believest this truth in thy heart, thy conscience finds peace. So faith honours Jesus, ascribes all the glory to his work. So the soul is comforted in grace and truth.

The true Messiah now appears,
The types are all withdrawn;
So fly the shadows and the stars
Before the rising morn,

Christ took our mortal flesh to show
The wonders of his love;
For us he paid his life below,
And prays for us above,

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Eph. 5. 15.

As the inward peace of the mind is greatly preserved or impaired by the christian's walk, it behoves us daily to see to it. "The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness," saith the Preacher. Eccles. 2. 14. Hence all who are "made wise unto salvation," are called to walk circumspectly. Like a person, who suspects danger on every side, his eyes look around him. He walks watchfully and carefully, lest evil surprise him unawares. He takes heed to the path he walks in, lest his feet slip and he get a fall, whereby he may be dirtied, if not bruised. Above all, it is the wisdom of the wise to be looking upward, knowing "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Jer. 10. 23.

Believer, whatever dangers thou mayest be exposed to from without, yet ever remember thou hast most of all to dread from within thee. Thy worst of foes is thine own corrupt nature. Against this be concerned to fix thy watchfulness and circumspection. "In the flesh dwells no good thing;" therefore expect no power, strength, or ability, to do good from it. Through a good opinion of, and vain confidence in nature and self, poor Peter fell very foully, and wounded himself very grievously. Say not with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog," that he should commit such or such an abomination against the Lord? No! as the queen of Sheba said of Solomon's glory, "Behold, half of it was not told me." 1 Kings 10. 7. So thou mayest say of the abominable villainy and deplorable sinfulness of thy carnal nature. Thou hast not seen one half of its guilt and corruption. The more thou art acquainted with thyself, in the light of truth, so much the more wilt thou, through the grace of the Spirit, be stirred up to look unto Jesus, to have all thy hope in him, and all expectation from him, to enable thee to circumspection in thy walk and conversation. He, who knows the fulness of redemption by Jesus Christ, need not be afraid to see the worst of himself, that he may rejoice in the glory former, and be watchful against the evil latter.

Awake our souls (away our fears,
Let ev'ry trembling thought be gone)
Awake and run the heav'nly race,
And put a cheerful courage on.

True, 'tis a strait and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint,

But ne'er forget the mighty God
That feeds the strength of ev'ry saint.

From Christ, the overflowing spring,
Our souls shall drink each fresh supply;

But if we trust our native strength,
We melt away, and droop, and die.

Master, carest thou not that we perish? Mark 4. 38,

Saints in all ages have experienced that their extremity of distress has been God's opportunity to deliver. So these disciples found it. They were in the most eminent danger, and were brought into the greatest fears and distresses. Their vehement address to Jesus shews it. Jesus was asleep. We believe in our Saviour as a man like unto us. We adore him as the sovereign Lord, whose "eyes are ever over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers." 1 Pet. 3. 12. Of this we have the clearest evidence, the fullest proof. Jesus awakes as a man, and with the power and sovereignty of Jehovah, he rebukes the boisterous wind, and says to the raging waves, "Peace, be still;" and instantly all nature obeys its Creator, and is hushed into a profound calm.

While others are pleased with the feats of a Caesar, or the conquests of an Alexander, how delightful to us to meditate upon the wonderful works of our God-man, and blessed Saviour! Transporting to know this awful God is ours, our Jesus and our Friend.

But art thou not ready, O believer, sometimes to say, "My Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten me." It seems as though he cares not, even though I perish. I am in the wide ocean of difficulty and distress. Corruption, rage, temptations assault. The fiery darts of the enemy fly thick around me. And I groan under the sense of a hard heart, and an absent God." Hear the voice of thy Lord, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted: "For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." Isa. 54. 7, 11. Judge not of God's love by thy sense and feeling, but by his word of truth, the stability of his promises, and the security of his oath. He may be battering down thy life of sense, to make thee strong in faith, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

The disciples, though in a terrible storm, were safe, because Jesus was in the ship, though asleep. So is every disciple where Jesus dwells in the heart by faith. The affections of God's love never cease, though storms surround us, and the sense of them may seem to us, as it were, asleep. And as with these disciples, so shall it be with thee, O christian; thou shalt find thy mighty Deliverer ever near to hear, and ever ready to save thee. For what saith thy Lord? "Call upon me in time of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." It is the joy of faith to reply, "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Psalm 32. 7.

Go, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. Mark 16. 7.

How different is the gospel from the law. While one is a voice of condemnation, terror and wrath; the other speaks nothing but grace, peace and love. The poor children only murmured for water in the wilderness, and their Mediator, even the meek Moses, is in wrath with them and calls them rebels. Here though the poor disciples had been very base and ungrateful to their loving Saviour; for they added sorrow to his distress when they all forsook him and fled: And Peter above all the rest; and as though Jesus was the most abandoned wretch, Peter with oaths and curses denied that he even knew him. What could one expect, but that the first message they should have from their Lord should be full of upbraiding? was it, Go tell those apostate rebels, I am risen from the dead; they shall receive their just deserts. Vengeance is mine, I will repay them? No; be astonished, O heavens: Hear, wonder and love, O ye backsliding children, devils are not permitted to terrify, but angels commissioned to comfort them. Tell his disciples, amazing! disciples still? how unworthy of the name! Yet more, lest this should prove as a dagger to poor Peter's heart, lest he should write bitter things against himself, "I am no disciple, though all the rest forsook and fled from Jesus, yet not one of them sinned with so high a hand as me. I have denied Jesus. I have cursed and swore most bitterly I ever knew him. Ah! woe is me; the Lord told me satan had desired to have me; so it must be." No, no, Peter, "whom thy Lord loves he loves to the end:

Not all that sin or hell can say,
Can turn his heart, his love away.

Peter is included in the commission of comfort: Peter by name. Did Peter sin above the rest? yet grace superabounds, therefore behold he is particularized above the rest by name. Who shall set bounds to the love of Jesus? Will any poor trembling disciple say, the Lord hath forsaken, my Lord hath forgotten me? True, thou mayst deserve it; but thy Lord deals not with thee after that manner. Though thou art a sinner, a backsliding sinner, a hell-deserving-sinner, the chief of sinners, yet his name is Jesus the Saviour, his nature is love; and it is the joy of his heart, and the work of his life, "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. John 8. 36.

Our most glorious sovereign Lord and King Jesus Christ, like some mighty conqueror whose subjects have been taken captive by the enemy, delivers them from their captivity, sets them at liberty from the dominion and tyranny of their enemies, and restores them to all the rights and privileges of his kingdom and government. Alas! in what a deplorable state doth our great deliverer find our souls! Taken captive by the devil at his pleasure, slaves and vassals to his will and power, under worse than Egyptian bondage, "tied and bound with the chain of our sins," bond-slaves to our corrupt lusts and carnal passions.

In this hopeless helpless deplorable state we all continue, without power, yea without will or desire to be set at liberty. Nay we are naturally pleased with the drudgery of sin and satan, in love with our bondage, fancying ourselves at liberty, and enjoying the most perfect freedom. But when our mighty Deliverer comes, he makes us free indeed. He bursts our bonds asunder, and casts away the cords wherewith we were bound. Jesus snatches our souls as a prey from the mighty, and the lawful captives are delivered. He invests us with the "freedom of citizens of the New-Jerusalem," and gives us the privilege of adoption, to be the sons of God through faith in him. Then are we the Lord's free-men—made free from sin, satan, the law and death. How great is Jesus' power! how rich his love! how free and sovereign his grace! it came unmerited and unsought by us: it is a freedom unbounded in its nature, and the happy subjects of it shall find it so in a blissful eternity: but here, though free, made free indeed in our spirits, yet we shall find, by daily experience, enemies and opposers to our uninterrupted enjoyment of it. Sin, though its guilt is washed away in Christ's blood and its power destroyed in the soul, will yet rage and war in the members. Satan, though like a strong man armed, is overcome and cast out, will often rally his forces and wage war against us. The law, though its curse is taken away and its demands fulfilled, though there is no condemnation from it to them that are in Christ Jesus; and death, though disarmed of its strength and sting through the victory of Jesus, yet the sweet sense and comfortable experience of all this is enjoyed by us only while we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath set us free," and are kept from being entangled with any yoke of bondage.

Awake our hearts, adore the grace
That frees us from our faults.

And pard'ning blood that swells above
Our follies and our thoughts.

We wrestle, &c. Eph. 6. 12.

It is too common with the children of God, when exercised with sharp conflicts of soul, to write bitter things against themselves. But we should do well always to bear in mind, that we are travellers through the territories of an implacable and powerful enemy, whose malicious spirit delights in harassing and distressing us in every part, soul and spirit, as well as flesh. That herein we are not alone, it is the common lot of all the children, more or less. Take, my brethren, the prophets and apostles as an example herein. We shall find them at times under severe trials and sore conflicts of spirit; but know, satan, our adversary, is a conquered foe; he can go no farther than our own Saviour will permit him; nor shall our exercise last one moment longer than our dear Master thinks proper; nor shall it issue in our destruction, but in satan's flight, our soul's deliverance, and our God's glory; and, like every thing else that befalls us, "works together for our good."

Our enemies are spiritual powers, princes, rulers, who, for numbers, may be stiled legions. Their nearness to us, and easy access to our spirits, in a way of striving and struggling for the mastery, in order to cast us down, is very justly stiled, "wrestling." Here the combatants grapple with, and are joined each to other; and the greatest danger is from the feet being tript off the ground, whereby we may be maimed and bruised by a fall. Happy for us, we stand: we stand by the power of God through faith—we stand upon this sure foundation. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." And Jesus knows that his people will be exposed to onsets of the enemy, but no power, subtilty, or malice shall prevail, "none (says our dear Preserver) shall pluck them out of my hands:" I, as man and mediator, hold them by LOVE: "My Father is greater than I." He keeps them by his irresistible and almighty power. Yet, alas, it must be owned, that conflicts for the season are grievous. To be attacked by a powerful invisible foe, whose element where he rules, as well as the time of battle, is always in darkness; therefore most afflicting to the children of light. But what a soul-strengthening, heart-reviving, and spirit-refreshing voice speaks from heaven to us! Hear, O soul, it is the voice of thy Redeemer, the Captain of thy salvation. Wast thou ready to think he had left thee to thy own weakness? No: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee. I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isa. 41. 10.

Jesus the Lord shall guard me safe
From ev'ry ill design,
And to his heavenly kingdom take
This feeble soul of mine!

God is my everlasting aid,
And hell shall rage in vain;
To him be highest glory paid
And endless praise, Amen.

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice.
Phil. 4. 4.

The wise man saith, "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." Prov. 15. 15. Every believer in Jesus hath a continual feast, and therefore has always reason to be of a merry heart; when he is not he lives below his privilege, and forgets the command of his loving Lord. Though daily experience produceth enemies to his spiritual joy, yet none can destroy our ground or foundation of rejoicing: That is fixed as a rock—permanent as the mountains, and standeth fast for ever and ever. Paul well knew this by his own experience: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" he describes as the christian's motto. What though with him thou art daily crying out, "O wretched man that I am," according to the flesh. Yet, believer, thou hast the same reason always to thank God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus after the spirit, as Paul had. Though in thyself cause of mourning and humiliation, yet continual matter of joy and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus.

Here is the wisdom of a christian to understand aright, and to act suitably to his character: "As having nothing in nature, yet possessing all things by grace." Being united to Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells, and "blessed with all spiritual blessings by God the Father in him." It is therefore our sweet privilege always to rejoice in Christ Jesus; in experience we find believing views of Jesus cause rejoicing in him. If we search the scriptures, which testify of Jesus, dwell much in meditation on his person, his offices, his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, we shall perceive a never-failing spring of joy, and day by day be looking that by the Holy Spirit we may see our interest more clearly in Jesus. So that even though the face and appearance of outward things may put on a gloomy countenance to nature and sense, yet shall we be like the stedfast prophet, who says, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Habak. 3. 17, 18.

Come we that love the Lord,
And let our joys be known;
Join in a song of sweet accord,
And all your troubles drown.

The sorrows of the mind
Be banish'd from the place;

Religion never was design'd
To make our pleasures less.

Then let our joys abound,
And ev'ry tear be dry;
We're marching thro' Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?
James 2. 14.

The soundness and orthodoxy of our faith is least of all suspected by us while in a state of nature. But many of God's dear children by faith in Jesus Christ, are often in doubt and perplexity; lest their faith should not be the faith of God's elect; to which salvation is sure. This may arise through the weakness of their understanding in the word of truth, and because as yet faith doth not bring forth the fruits of joy and assurance. But sooner or later the Holy Ghost, in a way of believing, will make this matter clear and satisfactory to their hearts. But if a man say he hath faith, and have not works, this is a weed which grows wild in nature's field.

What doth it profit? it brings no glory to God—it is unprofitable to man. No works of love and mercy flow from it. Saith our Saviour, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matt. 15. 13. The apostle puts an important question, "Can faith save him?" This is equal to a strong assertion, It cannot; he deceives his soul. But dost thou think thy faith, even accompanied with good works, can save thee, O christian? Verily no more than thy repentance, or thy love: These are alike gifts of grace by Jesus Christ. Given not to rival the Saviour in the heart—not to share with him in the glory of salvation: But to honour him, and comfort his members. Yet, we are ever to consider faith a precious grace of covenant-love. It endears a precious Saviour to the heart—it "works by love." By faith sweet peace, divine love, heavenly joys, are felt and experienced in the heart; and the end of faith will issue in the salvation of the soul.

But ever know faith doth not procure God's love, obtain his favour, make atonement for the guilt of thy sins, work out a righteousness to justify thee, nor merit the power of the Holy Spirit to sanctify thee: All this is enjoyed in believing, but not procured by faith. Faith, like the baptist's voice, cries in the soul, "Behold the Lamb of God." It claims no share in fulfilling terms of peace, or obeying conditions of salvation. By faith we honour God's word, look to his everlasting love, rely on Jesus, mourn over sin, abhor ourselves, and repent as in dust and ashes. Peace, love, joy, and all the inward fruits, as well as outward obedience, a holy walk, fruitfulness in every good word and work, are produced by the Holy Spirit, from the life and vigour of faith. How highly then doth it concern us daily to pray, "Lord, increase our faith." Luke 17. 5.

For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. Matt. 9. 21.

The case of this poor woman was quite desperate. Many painful operations she had undergone in hopes of a cure. Her money all spent, in procuring remedies. Her disorder so far from being abated, grew worse and worse. All human hope and help failed, and pale death seemed to approach her with great speed. But strange suggestion to her mind, "If I may but touch the garment" of that man, who is surrounded by yonder croud, I shall certainly be cured. What could she see in Jesus in particular more than in any other man? Surprising to think of, a cure from a touch! A touch not of his person, but his garment! How can nature and reason account for this? Had she consulted flesh and blood, sure she would have concluded, this suggestion is meer fancy, and will end in delusion. But the holy Spirit had inwardly made known Jesus to her. She saw somewhat of his glory. Hence her mind was disposed towards him, and she believed in her heart his power to heal her: and then she speaks, within herself, her thoughts concerning him. She came and touched him with fear and trembling, but she departed with triumph and rejoicing.

How secret and invisible are the operations of the Spirit, in working faith in the hearts of poor sinners! "No man can come unto me, saith Jesus, except the Father draw him." John 6. 44. A sight of Christ is of special grace. The first thought of help and hope in Jesus for poor sinners is from the word of truth and by the power of the Spirit, and the soul soon evidences itself to have "the faith of God's elect," for, under a sight and sense of its desperate state and undone condition, it goes to Jesus and him only for pardon and salvation; yet the poor heart is often exercised with an *if*; if I did but believe in him—if I did but touch him—if I did but feel in myself I was healed of my sin and plague, O how I should rejoice! Well, though the soul seems opposed by a croud and throng of opposition and difficulties, yet will it not be satisfied till it has found peace in Jesus—till it hears the voice of its Beloved speaking pardon and comfort by the word. When, like Isaiah, the soul cries out, "Woe is me, I am undone," it cannot rest till with him also, a live coal, from the altar of Jesus' love, is laid upon his mouth, and his language is changed to, "I am saved by Jesus," for "lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thy sin is purged." Isa. 6. 7.

The Lord! how glorious is his face?
How kind his smiles appear?
And oh! what melting words he says
To e'ry humble ear!

For you the children of my love,
It was for you I dy'd;
Behold my hands, behold my feet,
And look unto my side.

As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy
1 Pet. 1. 15.

To suppose that a believer in Jesus is destitute of the root or principle of holiness, and to call upon and excite him to do any thing in order to get or procure the life of holiness, is unscriptural; yea it is just as absurd as to expect a dead corps should exert itself in performing the actions of life in order to get life: for we are all naturally dead in trespasses and sins through the first Adam; but the second Adam, Jesus Christ, is a quickening Spirit, and every believer is made alive unto God through Jesus Christ and is created in true holiness. Christ is made sanctification unto him, and from a holy life received he is called to have his fruit unto holiness.

Therefore exhortations to excite and stir up such to a godly practice and holy conversation, are as necessary as they are frequent in the word of God. Art thou, O soul, a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus? What an inestimable honour is this! it should be the daily care and constant concern of thy soul, to walk worthy of his high and honourable vocation. It degrades thy birth to stoop to gratify base lusts. It demeans thy character to take up in the least with the slavery of sin and drudgery of satan. It was good advice a Heathen gave to a prince who was in danger of learning evil from bad company, "Always remember thou art a King's son." So thou, ever remember it, O christian, art a son of the King of kings. Thy Father is holy. Study to be like him. Aim to resemble him in thy daily walk. This day thou wilt be exposed to the snares of sin and temptations to evil, they are ever besetting thee. Remember thy calling, it is to holiness of life. Think of the end of it, happiness in glory. Methinks it should sound as harsh in one's ears, to hear of a wicked christian, as to hear of a dark sun. As knowing thy danger, remember thy Saviour's power, he can and will keep thee. As knowing thy weakness, implore his Spirit to strengthen thee. "Without Jesus thou canst do nothing, through Christ strengthening thee thou canst do all things." The more weakness and sinfulness thou findest and feelest, so much the more shouldst thou prize Jesus and ply at the throne of his grace.

Lord, I esteem thy judgments right,
And all thy statutes just;
Thence I maintain a constant fight
With ev'ry flatt'ring lust.

Thy word is everlasting truth,
How pure is every page.

That holy book shall guide our youth,
And well support our age.

Our faith and love, and every grace,
Fall far below thy word:
For perfect truth and righteousness
I glory in my Lord.

Nov. 6.

(310)

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
Prov. 17. 17.

We have a very striking instance of a genuine and uninterrupted friendship which mutually subsisted between David and Jonathan. How affecting is that pathetic mournful exclamation of David, when friendship's sweet bands were dissolved in death? "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." 2 Sam. 1. 16. Who can read this plaintive note without sympathy? Wisdom's assertion is literally exemplified in them. But though their love and friendship never abated in the dark scenes of adversity, but was alike at all times; yet death put a period to its existence. Natural friendship lives not beyond the confines of the grave.

But, O disciple of the Lamb, thou hast a Friend who ever lives and ever loves. The most exalted friendship, when compared to his, diminishes in glory, as the light of the brightest star disappears, when the dazzling glory of the sun shines forth. Is not Jesus "the Friend who loveth at all times?" Yea, before time had its beginning his love existed towards his church. Every member was loved by him, and was given to him of the Father. And when in time he saw them polluted in their blood, defiled with sin, and loathsome in their persons, yet (O wonderful!) that was the time of love, he passed by, his eye saw, his heart loved, and his lips said, Live. Dost thou, O soul, live by faith on the Son of God? This is the effect of love; this is love known and manifested. But even still dost thou find daily that thou art a poor sinner; therefore thou art grieved, and thinkest thou shalt weary out the love of thy friend? No; that cannot be; he loveth at all times; and "whom he loves, he loves to the end."

Jesus is "the Brother born for adversity: to comfort thee in and to support thee under it: Now thou art in an adverse state; the world, the flesh, and the devil are against thee; but thy Friend is above, engaged for thee; and he is stronger than all: therefore though in dangers oft, yet always safe. Jesus was born to suffer adversity for his brethren. A friend and a brother makes ones sorrows and sufferings his own. So did Jesus. Our sins were his, "he bore them in his own body." Surely "he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows." And hath he loved before time, and doth he love at all times? Then what shall separate from the love of Jesus? Nothing; for "in all things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us," so that as the power of Jesus is equal to his love, death, which parts the dearest friends, and dissolves the sweetest friendship here, shall introduce us to the nearest enjoyment of our best Friend, and dearest Brother above: for he says, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." John 17. 24.

The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.
Isa. 53. 6.

Here we behold the transaction of the glorious Trinity in the covenant of grace. Here is the method of the salvation of sinners of mankind. Jehovah, the Father lays, or causes to meet, all the sins of his people upon the Surety of the covenant the Son of his love. Jesus undertakes to bear them, and the Holy Ghost publishes this joyful truth unto the children of men, he works faith in their hearts and bears witness with their spirits of salvation hereby. Thus the three glorious Persons in the Godhead agree in one; even this one truth, salvation by Jesus. Happy is the man that believes it. Faith looks to the designs of grace, and rests upon the accomplishment of covenant-love.

He that undertakes to be surety for another, then the debt is reckoned to him and he accepts it. Thus our dear Saviour, our blessed surety stood up for us, engaged in our behalf. Our debts, all our iniquities they are imputed to him, laid upon him, charged upon his person, "he bears them in his own body on the tree." He fully satisfies, perfectly atones divine justice for them. "By the one sacrifice of himself he hath taken them all away, made an end of sin." Thus through the atonement of Jesus, justice is satisfied, grace reigns, mercy triumphs, sinners are pardoned, believers rejoice. O believer, thou art blessed of thy God who is just, therefore doth not, cannot impute sin unto thee. True, thou hast committed sins, but it is as true they were all laid upon Jesus. True, thou dost commit sin, it is equally true Christ did bear them: thou wilt commit sin, it is perfectly true thy Saviour hath atoned for them all, thou hast nothing to plead but guilty. Every charge the enemy brings from the righteous law against thee is just; own it, but ever plead in thine own conscience, Jesus hath satisfied for all, for there is now no condemnation to thee. O believer, this is a most precious truth, it is the truth of God, let devils rage against it, let men oppose it, yet will it be found true in its nature, most happy in its consequences to the children of God. Hence flows their peace, their holiness, their heaven. Hear their song below, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge—that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15. Hear their triumph above, "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, who hath washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. 1. 5.

While the eternal Three
Bear their record above,
Here I believe Christ dy'd for me,
And seal'd his precious love.

Lord, cleanse my soul from sin,
Not let thy peace depart;
Great Comforter, abide within,
And witness to my heart.

By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Eph. 2. 8.

Sleep is the image of death. Every morning we awake is a kind of new life. In sleep, how insensible of danger! how unable to prevent it! The Lord's mercies are renewed every morning, and his watchful Providence, his preserving power, is our safety. Reflect, O my soul, upon the free goodness and unmerited love of thy God! Happy for thee, daily to awake and arise from thy bed of slumber, with the sense of free-grace and sovereign love upon thy heart.

Temporal mercies are heightened and improved by a sense of spiritual and eternal blessings. Disciple, thou livest in a space of time, in which thou mayest look back upon eternal love—look forward to eternal glory—and look upon thyself and see what wonders grace hath done. Ere thou hadst a being, everlasting love, which gave thee existence, decreed thy salvation. But why salvation, rather than glorification and happiness? Both are included. And for thy present comfort, all the evil of sin thou now feelest, and all the dangers to which thou art exposed, are fully provided against in salvation. Grace provides a Lamb for thy ransom. In the fulness of time the Saviour is sent. Jesus, in human form, “appears to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” His expiring breath proclaims, “It is finished.” But thy poor soul lay in nature's darkness, in the sleep of death; and would have slept on till the last trumpet's dreadful sound had awaked thee to everlasting shame and confusion. Impossible this, being saved in love's decree, redeemed by blood divine: Grace challenged thy soul, called thee by the word, effectually quickened thee by the sovereign energy of the sacred Spirit. God gave his Son for thee. The Spirit works faith in thee. Hence Jesus is precious to thee; sin hateful, holiness lovely and desirable; in the knowledge of this salvation, in the believing, abiding views of this grace, consists all our peace, love, joy, holiness, heaven. Why then art thou not perfectly, uninterruptedly happy and holy? Verily, because thou art still in the flesh: Thy old man is still alive. Nature's pride and sinfulness daily resist the glory of grace and the exercise of faith. But in opposition to all, thou art to abide confident in the belief of the truth: daily study the love of thy God and Saviour. This tends to sink thee in humility. Daily consider thy deserts to be hell, and adore the riches of sovereign grace. This will prove, through the blessing of the Spirit, to keep thee from boasting, except in the Lord alone. “In the Lord [Jesus] shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” Isa. 45. 25.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God. 1 John 3. 1.

If a poor insolent debtor, who sees no hope, but to end his miserable life in a loathsome goal, yet is unexpectedly called to hear the will of a loving friend, whereby an ample provision is bequeathed him fully to satisfy all his wants, how must this rejoice his heart! And, in the ecstasy of his joyful mind, he would be ready to call upon every one around him to read the delightful testament. This is but a faint view of the riches of glory and honour bequeathed to ruined sinners by New-Testament love, ratified and sealed by the blood of Jesus. Upon the view of this, how should we be filled with wonder, fired with ecstasy, and our transported hearts should not keep silence! Angels see and admire: saints behold and adore the marvellously great, the inexpressibly glorious, the wonderfully discriminating love of the Father of Jesus! amazing to tell! comforting to believe—transporting to feel! Love hath made its way to sinful man. Love flowed through the heart of a crucified Jesus, Love hath reached my poor heart. What terms have we fulfilled, what conditions have we performed to procure this invaluable blessing? O the very question startles the truly gracious soul! It is a concern to his generous heart to hear such proud, vain notions taught. He rejects the thought with abhorrence, and cries, ‘Pride, thou busy foe, be gone.’ All, all is freely given, richly bestowed.

And am vile and unworthy I the called, the real Son of God by adoption through the faith of Jesus? O thou heavenly Paraclete, thou divine sanctifier, influence, daily influence my heart, my tongue, my life, to glorify my Father, my Saviour, my God! Though I have done nothing to procure this inestimable privilege, yet, enjoying this rich grace, love and gratitude demand corresponding fruits and a holy walk, worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called: so assuredly will spring another evidence of God’s children; therefore “the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

Though the dear Saviour, our blessed Master, “went about doing good,” yet even this could not gain him the approbation and esteem of the world. Never let disciples expect to be above their Master. Let us rejoice to follow Jesus, and be glad to imitate him, to do good, though we suffer evil.

Behold what wondrous grace

The Father hath bestow’d

On sinners of a mortal race,

To call them sons of God!

‘Tis no surprising thing!

That we should be unknown:

The Jewish world knew not their King,
God’s everlasting Son.

I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.
John 10. 28.

The followers of the Lamb want no proof of the divinity of their Lord and Saviour. It is plain from the word of truth, and by the power of the Spirit through faith in their hearts. "The gift of God is eternal life," saith St. Paul, Rom. 6. 23. "I give my sheep eternal life," saith Jesus. Therefore Jesus is both Lord and God. To give temporal life is not in the power of a finite being. He who gives eternal life must be, as our Jesus is, the infinite and eternal Jehovah, God over all, blessed for evermore. How full of grace and glory is this text? What consolation may the children of faith draw from it? Here is their mercy, they are in the hands of their precious Saviour. Hence they are safe and secure. "They shall never perish," saith Jesus who is the truth. Nothing shall pluck them out of my hands, saith he who hath all power in heaven and earth. "I give," saith the Saviour, now, at this present—what? grace into their hands, which, if they improve well, shall intitle them to glory? Infinitely more. Most glorious gift from the Saviour; most comfortable to his children. Nothing less than life, spiritual life, eternal life, the life of their immortal soul, which is made known unto them by believing. "This is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." John 17. 3.

Thus is Christ precious, salvation certain, and eternal life secure to every believing soul. But as to the knowledge and enjoyment of this life, in the experience of saints, they often find great abatements of its vigour and comfort. Hence the various frames they are exercised with. Spiritual life, in its knowledge, comfort and enjoyment, is opposed by a life of sense in the christian, and spiritual opposition from within and without him. The devil, the world and the flesh, may strive to pluck Christ's sheep out of his hands, and corrupt teachers may give the lie to our Saviour, and say such a thing may be, and so distress the minds of the Lambs of his flock. Impossible, for they cannot pluck them from him, as their salvation is certain from the covenant, oath and promise of a God of truth. It is made manifest by the word of truth. And from this we have the strongest assurance that can possibly be given. Our comfort and joy arise from our being simple in heart, firmly relying upon our Saviour's declaration, living upon him, and looking to him, and expecting, without the least doubt or hesitation, "that we are safe in his hands, and shall most certainly receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls." 1 Pet. 1. 9.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts 9. 6.

Such are the effects, when sovereign grace reacheth a sinner's heart. When the light of truth shines in the conscience, it makes the stoutest heart to tremble. When Jesus is manifested to the soul, it causes wonder and astonishment. Transient convictions of sin often beget horror of conscience; and they often pass away as the morning cloud and early dew. Such conversions are very common. Sinners are frequently turned from one sect and system of opinions to another: Yea, also by their lives and practices, they seem converted and changed: And often, where there is the least cause, there is the greatest confidence: Especially if persons are confirmed in their hopes by great pretension to experience, and can talk much of ecstasies and raptures, visions and revelations; which they suppose were from God. While many poor, trembling, self-emptied, and low-abased souls, who know and feel nothing but sin and helplessness in themselves, and from a discovery of the glory of Jesus, and the perfection of his salvation, seek all in him, and expect all from him. But yet they may remain diffident of their state, and doubtful of their conversion; and be often exercised with great perplexity of mind for a season. In both cases time only fully manifests the truth of conversion: Effects best prove their cause.

When Christ is revealed to the heart, when the soul, by the eye of faith, "sees him who is invisible," it discovers itself by holy mourning, and godly sorrow for past conduct—humble hope and scripture confidence of salvation; and this excites prayer to Jesus for instruction, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." The soul desires to obey his will in truth and love. The habitual frame of the soul to Christ, his truths and commandments, is a stronger evidence of real conversion than all visions, ecstasies, horror or transports which the passions can yield. So St. Paul's after conduct to Jesus and his cause, fully proved that he had felt the power, and tasted the sweetness of a Saviour's love. Thus, "Jesus the exalted Prince and Saviour, gives repentance and forgiveness of sins. The witness of this is the Holy Ghost, whom God gives to them that obey him." Acts 5. 31, 32.

As new-born babes desire the breast
To feed and grow and thrive;
So saints with joy the gospel taste,
And by the gospel live.

Not by the terrors of a slave,
Our souls obey Christ's will;
But with the noblest pow'rs we have,
We love and serve him still.

R r 2

Go back again: for what have I done to thee.
1 Kings. 19. 20.

It seems marvellous that the simple act of Elijah's casting the skirts of his mantle upon Elisha, should cause him to leave oxen and plough, parents and habitation; to run after a stranger. Doubtless there is a mystery of the Spirit under the history of the letter. The outward act of Elijah could not have had this effect, unless the inward power of the strong Lord had accompanied it. So Peter might have cast his net, and toiled all his days, ere he had taken a fish with a piece of money in his mouth, unless the Lord Jesus had effected this by his power.

Elijah's passing by Elisha and casting his mantle upon him, and the effect that followed, is a striking resemblance of the Lord, strong in power and wonderful in grace, passing by us poor sinners, and casting his mantle of love over us. Call to mind, disciple. Endeavour daily to remember that time of love when thy precious Saviour passed by, saw thee polluted in thy blood, immersed in busy care, when worldly hopes and carnal delights ingrossed thy whole concern. No eye, no nor thine own pitied thy poor but precious immortal soul: thou sawest not its misery, nor fearedst its danger. But, saith thy Saviour, when I passed by thee and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was a time of love, Ezek. 16. 8. O the mighty charm of divine love! How is the heart attracted and drawn after Jesus, as Elisha to Elijah. So says the smitten soul to Jesus, "I will follow thee." And, like him, its affections are drawn from worldly objects, and acts as the woman of Samaria when she found the Messiah, she forgot her errand and left her water-pot behind her.

"What manner of man is this," said the disciples of Jesus in astonishment, "that even the winds and the seas obey him? Surely we may cry out in admiration with St. John, "What manner of love is this? What a mighty God is Jesus, that the power of his love attracts our stubborn hearts, and causes us to follow him? What cause ever to admire the power and adore the freeness of Jesus' love. It found us ere we sought it. Little did Elisha think in the hour of his plowing, of being called to the high honour of being the Lord's prophet. Ah, what was thy employ when Jesus first cast his mantle over thee? Perhaps, like Saul, sinning with a high hand, employed in the devil's drudgery, in open rebellion against a loving Saviour, and yet priding thyself in the filthy rags of thine own righteousness. But now this is the joy and rejoicing of faith, where God casts the mantle of his love, that soul he clothes with the robe of his Son's righteousness. So "grace reigns by Jesus Christ." Rom. 5. 21.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal. 2 Cor. 4. 18.

The faith of the gospel stamps vanity upon the righteousness, glory and happiness of every object short of Jesus. When the soul beholds the king in his glory, it pours contempt upon all things beside. All the transient objects of time and sense die in esteem while the crucified Saviour is in view: this is our greatest gain, our chiefest glory. Far, infinitely beyond all the reasonings of vain philosophy is the christian's fight by faith to reconcile the mind to afflictions, endure with patience under, and give victory over them. Thus Moses "endured, seeing him that is invisible." Heb. 11. 27. Though the eye of nature hath not seen, nor the uncircumcised ear hath heard, nor can the carnal heart conceive the spiritual things of God's covenant, Jesus' incarnation and the Spirit's revelation, yet the enlightened heaven born soul sees these things in open vision by the eye of faith. To behold them is his chief delight and joy; to obtain clearer views of them his daily study; to converse and be more familiar with them is his chief glory, his heaven begun on earth.

A strange mystery to his natural self, and to the carnal world, is the believing soul. To love and converse with an unseen Saviour; to look to invisible objects, and derive all happiness from things that are not seen, no marvel that there should be so great fight of opposition from nature and reason against such a life.

Soul, ever remember with humility and thankfulness, our dear Saviour saith, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." Mark 4. 11. "These things are hid from the wise and prudent." O disciple, whilst thou adorest the Father's love, rejoicest in the Son's grace, remember thou art wholly indebted for all this rich discovery to the divine Spirit. Give him equal glory. Grieve not the Spirit, who is the glorifier of Jesus, by turning thine eyes to any other object for righteousness, peace and happiness. Is Christ thine all? are the unseen things of his kingdom thy portion? Be a chaste virgin to thy Lord. "Where thy treasure is, there let thy heart be also." Happy for thee to find with Paul, "I die daily." I am dying to the world while living in it. I find and feel many pains and disorders in my frail body, as sure forebodings of hastning dissolution. I know perfectly, that the day of the Lord is coming, that each breath I draw brings nearer the solemn advent. What then should I look to, upon what should my affections be placed? Blessed be God for revealing these things as our portion. "Be careful for nothing, &c." Phil. 4. 6.

Pertaining to the conscience. Heb. 9. 9.

There is in all of us inward perception and knowledge, as well as outward discernment and observation. What passeth on our minds only God and our own spirits are privy to. Herein consists the peculiar glory and excellency of the religion of Jesus. We adopt that saying, "My mind to me a kingdom is," for we feel in our minds the kingdom of Jesus. We find somewhat more than outward shew or shadow; we enjoy inward substantial blessings, such as a stranger intermeddles not with. The truths of Jesus do not merely amuse our heads and engage our tongues, but are brought home and applied to our hearts and consciences. As the godly patriarchs "were persuaded of them and embraced them." Heb. 11. 13. They hugged and embraced them as their rich portion and heavenly treasure. The life of the gospel is in the application of it to the conscience, in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus upon it.

What was that great lord the better for the miraculous plenty in Samaria, when Elisha told him, "he should see it with his eyes, but not eat of it?" 2 Kings 7. 19. Feeding upon Jesus in the heart, as the accomplishment of all the types, ceremonies, and institutions of old; and as the sum and substance of every christian duty and gospel ordinance now; this brings in perfection to the conscience.

Thus we are to look to Jesus in the perfection of his atonement—in the completeness of his righteousness. So we are daily to exercise ourselves, that we may have and keep a good conscience purified from sin and undefiled with corruption, purged from dead works to serve the living God, and our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience that we may inwardly rejoice in him, and comfortably walk before him, and long for the enjoyment of him. Herein we glory in being PERFECTIONISTS, for in Jesus we know we have perfect atonement and perfect cleansing from all sin in his blood; we are assured that we have in him a perfect righteousness in which we glory, to appear in the presence of God and to plead before his throne: This is our wedding garment, we have it by being married to the Lamb. But we dare not look to any thing else for perfection; if we do, we feel the dreadful effects of it, our conscience is instantly defiled.

Conscience is the best friend or the worst enemy. A sense of sin makes it our worst enemy. Our blessed Jesus makes it our best companion. Happy for us, if the moment we feel a sense of sin, we instantly confess it to Jesus, pray him to take it away, and give us peace in our consciences. To this very end he came into the world, and in vain can we expect a good conscience from any other object. He is the gift of the Father; the Spirit bears witness to no other; saints in all ages have triumphed in him; and, blessed be God, "His blood cleanseth from all sin." 1 John 1. 7.

My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. Phil. 4. 19.

Paul, though an eminent saint, and a great apostle, was yet a man of like passions, a poor sinner, even as others: Yet, with what amazing boldness and confidence he speaks of what his God shall do! Though he had never been admitted into the secret counsels of the glorious Trinity, yet the Holy Spirit had well instructed him in the covenant transactions of Jehovah. He well knew the nature of the everlasting covenant; that it was "ordered in all things" in infinite wisdom, and eternal love: That all the graces and blessings contained in it are sure to all the heirs of promise. As soon might a God of truth prove false—a God of faithfulness be unjust, as any one of his promises, through the faith of Jesus, fail.

Such is the security of the covenant. Such the confidence of faith. God the Father is the fountain—the Son the treasury—and the Spirit the dispenser of all grace. Believers needs are God's concerns. They shall have a rich supply for all their wants. The value of their supplies are enhanced to the highest degree: Not only riches, but riches in glory; glorious riches. They receive all from glory; and all comes to them through the glorified Man Jesus Christ; he is their "Friend that loveth at all times: their brother who was born for adversity." In the hour of our distresses, and in the time of our need, we too often forget that we have such a God and Saviour to trust in and call upon. Instead of looking to a throne of grace, we pore over a dunghill of corruptions, where we are sure to find nothing but misery, poverty and sin. Is there such an inexhaustible fund of riches in Christ Jesus? Is it for the poor and needy? Dishonourable thought of Jesus, ever to imagine he is an unconcerned spectator of our wants! or that he will withhold when we need. Nay, but "he knows how to have compassion." He is touched with a tender sympathy, a feeling sense of our infirmities," Heb. 4. 15. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah." Psalm 62. 8.

When in the light of faith divine

We look on things below,

Honour and gold and sensual joy

How vain and dang'rous too.

God is mine all-sufficient aid,

My portion and my choice;

In him my vast desires are fill'd,

And all my pow'rs rejoice.

In vain the world accosts my ear,

And tempts my heart anew;

I cannot buy your bliss so dear,

Nor part with heav'n for you.

But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.
 Luke 10. 20.

It is matter of great joy to the heart of faithful ministers of the gospel to see the work of their Lord prosper in their hands, Satan dethroned, and the kingdom of Jesus set up in the hearts of poor sinners. Our Lord by no means discourages rejoicing on this account; but his loving heart would not have it terminate and center in this only; for their success may abate; a season may come when they might have cause to take up this lamentation, "Lord, who hath belied our report?" we see no more tokens of thy victorious grace. Therefore, lest their hands should hang down, and their hearts grow dejected and faint in their labours, he directs them to an inexhaustible fountain of consolation and joy. "Your names are written in heaven." Always rejoice in this, and you are always "unto God a sweet savour of Christ, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved." 2 Cor. 2. 15.

This is also a sweet lesson to every christian. It is doubtless cause of great joy to find and feel the power of sin and Satan subdued, corrupt lusts mortified, disorderly passions restrained, unruly appetites brought into subjection, and the meekness and power of Christ to have the rule and government in ones heart. For these spiritual blessings we are inexpressibly indebted to the Holy Spirit through the faith of Jesus. Notwithstanding "in this rejoice not" [only and chiefly] saith Jesus. He leads us from the streams to the fountain; from the effects to the cause. "Rather, rejoice because your names are written in heaven." In times of heaviness, through manifold temptations, frames may vary. In seasons of darkness, feelings and comforts may decline; "nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. 2. 19. But can any one know that his name is written in the book of life? Doubtless we may, else there is no meaning in our Lord's words. How can one rejoice on this account, if we do not know it? Though we cannot read the book of life, yet, glory to the Spirit, we have the records of truth. These reveal it plainly unto us. We are fully assured, that "we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3. 26. If we have faith in Jesus, the faith of God's elect, this is an evidence of our adoption, and we may, we ought, we are commanded by the Lord of truth and grace, "to rejoice, knowing that our names are written in heaven."

So Paul, who had the mind of Christ, speaking of some, whose names are written in the book of life, immediately adds, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice." Phil. 4. 4. But may not our names be blotted out? No, that is impossible. We are assured, whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it or taken from it. Eccles. 3. 14.

He is our peace. Eph. 2. 14.

When Jehu came to take possession of the crown of Israel, Jezebel put this (as she thought) cutting question, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" 2 Kings 9. 31. As Jehu was called and anointed to be king of Israel, according to the word of the Lord, so is every christian called and anointed by the word and Spirit to the kingdom of Jesus. "He hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory, &c." Rev. 1. 6.

But ere they take possession of their crown of glory, they must expect many severe and aggravating questions from the mouth of the adversary on earth. Verily he hath great reason to urge the most cruel treatment, and to charge upon us the vilest behaviour to our Master Jesus. The bloody deed of crucifying the Lord of life and glory, was caused by our sins. Not a transgression a disciple of Jesus commits, but the precious blood of his Master was spilt for. The life of sin, and love of sin, is in our nature. And the law of sin is in our members. And while we are daily exposed to sin in our practice, satan, like a powerful Assyrian army, will invade our land of nature, and attack the peace of our souls. What can we do? If we deny his charge, and say, "We have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Acknowledge his accusations we must. All in nature, reason and conscience unite to witness against us. But shall this destroy the comfort of our minds, the hope of our souls, and the peace of our hearts? Then how small our knowledge? how feeble our faith? how weak our hearts in the grace which is in Christ Jesus? All the powers of darkness, all the curses of the law, all the accusations of sin, blessed for ever blessed be the grace of our God! cannot, shall not overthrow this soul-comforting, Christ-exalting, love-exciting truth. This man, even Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, he is, he shall be our peace. For he hath "made peace by the blood of his cross." Col. 1. 20. The everlasting gospel proclaims it: the eternal law of love confirms it. By faith we receive the joyful news of it. By the Spirit our souls enjoy the sweet sense of it. By the word the blessed Spirit lifts up our pure minds, by exhortations and examples, to look unto Jesus. Look off from every other hope. Turn from every other object. His name, his nature, his offices, his work, all speak peace to poor, guilty, self-condemned souls, whose only hope is Jesus.

O let our voices never cease

To sing the Saviour's name;

Jesus, th' Ambassador of peace,

How cheerfully he came!

It cost him cries and tears

To bring us near to God;

Great was our debt, and he appears

To make the payment good.

S P

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1. 8.

Sincere upright souls before God, the scriptures deem PERFECT. They are free from hypocrisy and dissimulation. They judge of themselves, and speak of themselves, according to truth. And Christ, who is essentially THE TRUTH, dwelleth in their hearts by faith; and the Spirit leads them into all truth, concerning themselves and the salvation which is in Christ. The enemy, who abode not in the truth himself, is ever blinding souls to the truth, and striving to seduce them from the truth, and to make them not only deceive others, but themselves also; he never baits his hook with a more pleasing bait to nature, than when he aims to make us think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think: and when he causes us to judge of ourselves, and say, "I am not like other men," I have no sin. This is the very essence of Pharisaism.

That very moment any soul says so, he is under the influence of a deceitful spirit: "he bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, and his religion is vain." James 1. 26. "He flattereth himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found hateful." Psalm 36. 2. But if we see no sin, if we feel no sin, are we not to tell of our happy state? is not Jesus glorified hereby, who hath thus perfectly saved us? Seeing and feeling! If one in a high fever says, "I am quite well, I feel no disorder." We are sure he has a deceitful sense, he is not in his right mind. Alas, our senses are deceitful judges. They may delude us. They most certainly do, if they testify contrary to the truths of God's word. And our Saviour is only glorified by the truth. Shall we give the lie to the Spirit of truth, and the word of truth, under pretence of glorifying Jesus? Beware, O soul, Satan, "transforms himself into an angel of light," and would make thee think and say, Thou hast no sin, for another reason than to glorify Christ, even to glorify thyself in thine own eyes, and in the sight of others! We hear a confident Peter, little did he think what was in his heart, when he said, [perhaps he saw no sin, nor felt sin at that time] "Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Think of his awful fall, his horrid oaths, and dreadful imprecations, and be humble. Awful effects are not wanting in our day, of such as Satan has pulled up with this unscriptural notion of being sinless, and dreadful effects have followed. The higher the elevation, the lower the fall.

O soul, ever remember "thou standest by faith, [which leads us intirely out of ourselves to the perfection of Jesus] be not high-minded, [exalted and lifted up with a notion of a state contrary to God's truth, and which the beloved apostle files self-deceit,] but fear;" ever be afraid of resisting the light, and setting thyself in opposition to the positive assertions of the Spirit of truth.

This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life. 1 John 5. 11, 12.

Sovereign power permits man to fall. Guilt fills the wretched pair with dread, and cuts off all hope in God, all claim upon him; therefore our first parents "fled from the presence of the Lord, and hid themselves." Sovereign Love interposed, and the poor, guilty, trembling partners in woe, were called before their highly-offended, justly provoked Lord. Was it to behold him clothed with vengeance? to hear the sentence of their eternal doom to destruction? to see hell opened to receive them? Be astonished, O heavens! rejoice, ye apostate children of hell deserving parents! A record of what was transacted in the eternal court and counsel of heaven, is published on earth, which brings instead of wrath, mercy—instead of woe, blessing—instead of hatred, love—instead of eternal death, everlasting life—instead of a hell of misery, a heaven of happiness, to their trembling hearts.

Thus man came not to meet God, to sue for pardon, and intreat grace, but fled his presence; yet the Lord follows sinful man with love in his heart, not to propose terms of accommodation or conditions of peace, but to proclaim the joyful news of eternal life as the free gift, of free favour, unmerited grace, unconditional mercy, in and by the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. Glorious record of love! blessed testimony of life! joyful tidings of grace! Hast thou heard, known and believed it? "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name." Behold and admire the wisdom as well as the love of thy God, and in this rejoice and be humble continually; life, eternal life is given us in his beloved Son, therefore can never be lost and forfeited.

"Our life is hid with Christ in God." O, if Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith, we have God's beloved Son, we have eternal life. The report of it is joyful to our ears; the enjoyment of it enters our hearts, and creates our present heaven, and fills us with joyful hopes of future glory. We have the strongest confidence, the fullest assurance to animate our souls, "Because I live, saith the Head, ye [my members] shall live also." John 14. 19. God hath given us eternal life, and he is faithful, he will not revoke his own free precious gift. Jesus hath overcome every enemy and opposer that might prevent our enjoyment of eternal life. We are joined unto the Lord, and are one spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 17. The holy Spirit hath effected such a union to Jesus as can never be broken.

Look up, my soul, to him,
Whose death was thy desert;

And humbly view the living stream
Flow from his pierced heart.

Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. Psalm 27. 9.

"Love never faileth." It ever worketh in the heart of disciples towards its beloved object. It cannot bear distance or separation from Jesus—the thought of it is grievous and painful—the dread of it makes it plead, fills the mouth with arguments, lest the poor soul should lose the sweet sense and comforting savour of the love of God—his presence is its heaven—his absence is its hell—his smiles create joy—his frowns bring gloom and sorrow on the mind. When the poor heart feels a sensible withdrawing of God, and the light of his countenance is hid, it cannot but be restless and uneasy. Real believers experience christianity to be more than a name—doctrines more than meer speculations to fill the head, and amuse the thoughts—in ordinances somewhat more is enjoyed than a dull round and formal attendance upon them. Religion is a life of love—a substance and enjoyment of the God of truth, of faithfulness, of love, and the God of ordinances.

Therefore such a soul most of all fears the anger of its loving Father, and dreads to be put away in displeasure, though but for a moment. To be left to ones self, O this calls up ones cries and tears, and urges one to plead hard with ones dear Saviour. "Thou hast been my help." Past experiences of the love and power of its Lord are remembered, and urged as a plea for present help and future hope—his precious promises of faithfulness and truth, O they are beheld as "fitly spoken, like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Prov. 25. 11. Past love cannot be forgotten. Past mercies are recalled; and what the Lord is, still in the appropriation of faith, is pleaded, "Forsake me not." Why so? Because, "thou art the God of my salvation." To whom should we go but to thee, O Jesus! Thou hast the words of eternal life: Forsake not the work of thine own hands—the soul for whom thou didst toil and suffer, bleed and die—there is salvation in thee, and in no other—I have found it so—arise thou Sun of righteousness, scatter the clouds of darkness, the mists of sin, and the fogs of unbelief—recall my wandering steps—revive my drooping spirit—bring near thy salvation in present peace and love." Such will be the cries and pleadings of Jesus-loving hearts. Such are the genuine usings of that faith which worketh by love. It ever hath a God in Christ for its object; his faithfulness and truth for its support, his promises for its pleas, his glory for its aim, and the comfortable sense and enjoyment of his love as its hope and heaven,

Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways: to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins. Luke 1. 76, 77.

The day of gospel-truth, like the light of the morning, breaks forth gradually upon the benighted soul, and it increaseth to mid-day brightness and glory. "The path of the justified is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Thus is it in the experience of enlightened souls. The light of God's word manifests the truth as it is in Jesus gradually. It discovers condemnation and guilt by the law, and grace and pardon by the gospel. The baptist-dispensation prepares the way in the heart, before the soul enjoys the sweet sense of pardon of sins by the faith of Jesus. The law is a voice only of wrath and terror to the soul. It leaves the poor sinner in the dreadful state it finds him: pronounces its curse upon him. It can show him no remedy. It points to no hope. To work wrath in the conscience, and to condemn, is all the broken law can do.

The voice of the baptist cries to the soul in a wilderness state. Though it is rather the hoarse cry of austere severity, than the charming melodious voice of peace and love. It calls to baptism of repentance—a confession of sins—a change of mind, concerning former hopes of salvation—and also a change of life and practice. The poor sinner is hereby "warned to flee from the wrath to come"—is pointed to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

Many souls seem as it were to be brought under this dispensation. Some continue for a long season in it. They are in suspense between hope and fear concerning their state. The name of Jesus is precious to them. The word is their hope, and the promises the stay of their souls. The Spirit of wisdom sees meet it should be so. But the kingdom of Jesus is at hand in knowledge and comfort. Salvation by Christ is made known to them. But as yet they enjoy not the assured sense of their own interest in and the knowledge that their sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ. They are the people of God, though they are not fully assured of it, not having yet received "the baptism of remission of sins," by the Spirit of adoption. But pardon is the certain privilege of believing souls—it is sure by the promise of a faithful God—it is obtained by the precious blood of Jesus—it assuredly shall be enjoyed as the gift of the comforting Spirit. "The vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. The just shall live by his faith." Hab. 2. 3, 4.

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.
 Psalm. 27. 14.

"Be of good courage!" Alas, how can one be so, when all sense and feeling tend to dishearten the mind and deject the soul? Lively frames in duty, sweet enlargements of heart, heavenly transports of joy, delightful ecstasies of faith, ravishing tastes of love, all like Noah's dove have taken their flight, I fear, says the drooping heart, never, never more to return. Truly, like Hezekiah, "I mourn as a dove, mine eyes fail with looking upward, O how I am oppressed, undertake for me." Isa. 38. 14. Still faith the Comforter by his word, "Be of good courage!" remember thy calling, it is to live by faith, to honour thy Lord and be obedient to his word. Thou hast the sentence of death in thyself, that thou shouldst not trust in thyself, lest thine heart depart from the Lord. Not frames and feelings, but God's love and promises in Christ Jesus to sinners are the foundation of hope. These are abundantly sufficient to inspire the soul with courage, with good courage, to go on in the ways of the Lord.

Here is the steadiness of faith, to cleave to Jesus, to abide by the truth, steadily to persevere in the paths of duty, in the course of obedience to him. Shall this be ever suspended, because we have not lively frames and joyful feelings? how would this prove that we walk by faith and our eye was single to Christ's glory? Nay we shall then only serve the Lord by fits and starts of sense and passion, rather than by the uniform consistent obedience of faith. The Lord's word is our rule of duty. His promises our support. His grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. If our hearts are weak, that we cannot run with alacrity the way of God's commandments we desire; so the much more reason have we for our souls to wait on the Lord for the times of refreshing from his presence. But he will strengthen our hearts, "For he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Isa. 40. 29. "Wait, I say, on the Lord." David repeats the injunction with a holy fervour both to his own soul and to others. He has promised, expect fulfilment. Here is the exercise of FAITH, trusting in the Lord Christ for what we stand in need of; of HOPE, expecting to receive all from him; of PATIENCE, waiting continually upon him. Most precious promise! "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Isa. 40. 31.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11. 1.

Happiness, that inestimable jewel, every man is in search after. But to seek it from objects that are unseen and invisible to our natural senses, is a downright paradox, and will be ever condemned as the greatest absurdity in the judgment of depraved sense and carnal reason. In the knowledge, love and enjoyment of God, true happiness alone consists; and the only living and true God hath revealed himself in Christ Jesus. This is the christian's God. He knows no other. It is a blessed truth built upon and supported by the word of God: And by faith this subsists in his mind, and is clear and evident to him.

From this inward believing, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," O what an extensive prospect for hope ariseth! God in Christ; the promises all in Christ; and he that believeth is in Christ, and Christ dwelleth in his heart by faith; all the blessings of time, and all the glories of eternity are sure; they are settled by the yea and amen of God upon such happy souls.

Shall any bold emissary from satan or the flesh demand of the believing soul, what right hast thou to the inheritance of this good land? Abraham's sons have Abraham's plea: It is mine by promise: by faith I sojourn in it. God's promise is faith's claim. What he has spoken is the ground or subsistence of hope. But may not other witnesses stand up and declare against the christian? Doubtless many. From the old man, the flesh, satan and the law. But the first is under sentence of death, his witness is invalid. Satan is a known liar from the beginning, therefore no credit is to be given to him. And the evidence of the law is out of date; it is superceded by the promise; "for the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after the covenant, which was confirmed by God in Christ, cannot disannul it, that it should make the promise of none effect." Gal. 3. 17. But blessed be our Lord, though he suffers his children to be attacked by many adversaries, he doth not leave himself without a witness and an evidence in their own hearts. Though each one of them cannot say, 'I know I am a child of God, yet the weakest believer in Jesus hath the evidence of truth, the witness in himself, and the reality and certainty of invisible objects, "things not seen;" of things past in the eternal covenant of grace and peace—of things in time, the finished work of Jesus—of things to come, the glories of an eternal world—and amidst opposition from every quarter, here is a proof of the inward subsistence, and evidence of spiritual and invisible objects, in their longing after, stronger faith in them, and clearer knowledge and enjoyment of them. "To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." Matt. 25. 29.

The word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 1 Theff. 2. 13.

A proclamation of grace, issued from an earthly king, has proved effectual to reduce the most desperate and hardened rebels to lay down their arms and promise true allegiance. But though the word of God is a proclamation of free grace, glad tidings of full pardon, though replete with the most tender exhortations, the most endearing invitations, yet so abominable is our perverseness, so daring our obstinacy, that we should remain deaf to every call, and continue hardened in our rebellion against the most high God, till we fall victims to his justly deserved wrath and justice. But O amazing love! lie in the dust, O my soul, and adore the victorious power of our all-conquering Saviour! The gracious Spirit makes gracious words effectual. While unbelief shuts up every avenue of the soul against the light, truth, peace and love of the word of God. Faith esteems every portion of the gospel as the food, the life, the joy of the soul. By the agency of the Spirit the word becomes powerful to beget faith, and then works effectually in believing hearts.

Sin, the most hateful foe, though before thought of trifling consequence, now then even the sense of its indwelling-corruption, is a burden and a grief to the heaven-born soul. O the cries, the tears, the struggles, the prayers it causes the believing heart! The once-despised and lightly esteemed Nazarene is known, beheld and loved as precious, "as altogether lovely, as the chiefest among ten thousand."

The promises of God, once wholly unregarded, now, how sweetly prized! beheld as suitably ranged, and profusely scattered through every page of the lively oracles! The Spirit's holy gifts and sanctifying graces, are now pleaded for as contained in the blessed charter of the word of God. No marvel, saints in all ages have held the holy scriptures in the highest esteem; for they have proved them the grand means, in the hand of the Spirit, of quickening, supporting, edifying and comforting their souls. They, who have felt the power and sweetness of God's word, will say with David, "Rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil." Psalm 119. 162.

This is the word of truth and love
Sent to the nations from above;
Jehovah in his word doth shew
What his almighty arm can do.

May but this grace my soul renew,
Let sinner's gaze and hate me too;
The word that saves me does engage
A sure defence from all their rage.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Phil. i. 21.

Jesus is all in all to his members. He is their first hope, and their last stay; their alpha and omega, the beginning of their confidence, and the end of their hope. Their Christ-cross-row, which they will be ever learning on earth, till they attain to the perfect knowledge and full enjoyment of him in glory. Thus is Christ the greatest gain in life and in death. What endears Jesus to the soul, increases its love, and raises its adoration to the highest degree is, that Jesus is the free gift of the Father's love. Our whole salvation was undertaken and finished by him, through his superabounding free grace to the wretched, guilty and undeserving. And since thou hast heard of this grace, and been made acquainted with the salvation of Jesus, what hast thou done, or what canst thou do to obtain an interest in the Saviour's grace, or procure a title to salvation? Consider this; say, If left to thyself, would not persecuting Saul's practice have been followed by thy conduct?

In regard to being a citizen of Rome, the chief captain said, 'With a great sum I obtained this freedom.' But as to the heavenly city, every believer may joyfully answer with Paul, "But I was free-born;" new-born of the Spirit, into all the privileges and enjoyments of the kingdom of Jesus. Dost thou possess faith, hope and love, peace, joy and holiness? Confide not in these as thy Righteousness; for these are the graces of the kingdom, the fruits of the Spirit. These thou hast gained by Jesus; but not given that his members should glory in themselves, but in him the head, to whom they are hereby conformed, and for whose kingdom they are by these graces made meet.

There is a sweet appropriation of Paul, happy he, happy every believer, who, through the Spirit's witness to the heart, is able to say, "For me, Christ is my gain in life, in death. The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2. 20. "To die is gain." We know we shall lose nothing by death but all sin and sorrow. We shall gain such infinitely great and eternally glorious blessings, as at present our hearts cannot conceive: we must die fully to know it. But this we are perfectly assured of, we shall gain the uninterrupted sight, presence and enjoyment of our dear Lord. All glory to him by whom we gain somewhat of this upon earth, and are assured of the fullest enjoyment of it in glory.

Victorious Lamb, what can we pay
For favours so divine?

We would devote our hearts away
To be for ever thine.

T t

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, Rev. i. 7.

With what ardour of heart may every believer cry out, Blessed be God, every hour brings nearer the solemn advent, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus! "Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed." Come, thou once-despised Nazarene, thou once-crucified Saviour. He shall come. He will come quickly, and be seen in his human form. Shall we not see those wounds and scars in his body, the tokens of his inestimable love to, and perfect victory of his cross for poor sinners? How joyful in the exercise of faith, the fervour of love, the expectation of hope is this contemplation! This quells the fears of nature, mortifies its lusts, subdues its corruptions. To this end are we born again of the Spirit, that we should enjoy the visions of faith, see Jesus, live by faith upon him, long for his appearing, have fellowship with him in the sufferings of his cross; so shall we share with him in the glories of his crown and kingdom, "when he shall come to be glorified by his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

Whence then our dejection of mind, our fears of death, our unwillingness "to be absent from the body, that we may be present with the Lord?" Truly, all this ariseth from the mystery of iniquity which worketh in us. But here is our wisdom, to oppose the mystery of faith to that. Never venture to think of your own dying without considering the death of Jesus. Look not at your own sins without looking at the blood of Jesus. Think not a moment of his appearing as a judge, without remembering him as a precious Saviour. Dwell not on the glory and majesty of his eternal power and Godhead, without reflecting on his humble form, his manhood state. Conceive not of him as a king and lawgiver, without considering him as a priest to atone for our sin, and to interceed for us poor sinners.

So shall we daily prove that we are more than conquerors over every foe that opposeth the holiness and comfort of our souls through Jesus, who loved us. "Behold he cometh!" O joyful day! most desirable sight! Then our sorrows, our fears shall forever cease. Our foes, that we this day find and feel, we shall see no more for ever. We are fully assured, to them that look for him, "shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." "O lift up your heads with joy, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Christ is the man, th' exalted man,
Whom we unseen adore:
But when our eyes behold his face,
Our hearts shall love him more.

Those soft, those blessed feet of his,
That once rude iron tore,
High on a throne of light they stand,
And all the saints adore.

Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Psalm 73. 24.

That is a precious caution of our loving Saviour, "Judge not according to the appearance." John 7. 24. And the same Spirit which dwelt in Jesus, by St. Paul, reproves saints, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" 2 Cor. 10. 7. Through this conduct, saints in all ages have puzzled their minds, and have distressed their own souls; have been tempted to hard thoughts of their God, and have not "judged righteous judgment," in respect to carnal men, and the dispensations of God's providence to them. So we see Job greatly exercised, Job 21. 7. and Asaph in the above Psalm. But after the cloud of carnal reasoning and unbelief passed over their minds, the Sun of glory and truth shone again with splendor upon them, then faith puts forth its lively exercises, and sweet appropriations of God. "O my God and Saviour, I see thy ways to man are just! Righteous art thou, O Lord. Thou art my God, I will love thee. Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, &c." As the Lord is often said to make a covenant with his people, when it was only renewing his old covenant of grace and love in Christ Jesus; so faith frequently makes a fresh choice of claim to and glory in the Lord Jesus: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure, saith the Lord." Isa. 46. 10. Amen, saith the believing heart. By thy word and Spirit guide me continually. That shall be my guide, my companion, and my familiar friend.

Blessed christian! though in Paul's case, Acts 27. 20. "When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, when no small tempest is upon thee, and all hope of being saved seems taken away," yet when Jesus is at the helm, the vessel shall ride out every storm, and be brought safe to the haven of glory and blessedness.

Some persons seem so wholly taken up with prying into the secret purposes and inscrutable depths of God's decrees, that, like the philosopher, who was so intent in observing the starry heavens, but being careless of his walk, he fell into a ditch. Not God's secret purposes, but his revealed truths are the objects of our faith: "His word is a light to our feet." By that he counsels and directs us. The gracious Spirit leads and guides his children in the paths of peace and holiness. It is true, the path to glory is unpleasing to the flesh, and therefore is ever opposed by it. But as there is a disposition in regenerate souls to long for glory, so also a love in them to God's word and the way of holiness. In this the children of God are manifest. Every child of God he will most certainly receive to glory. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God." Rom. 8. 14.

Zealous of good works. Tit. 2. 14.

Call to mind, disciple of Jesus, how in times past thou didst walk according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and yet the god of this world so blinded thine eyes, and so deceived thine heart, (strange infatuation!) that thou didst talk of, and trust in even what had no existence, thine own good works. Glory to the rich grace of our Saviour, who delivers us from the natural notions of our corrupt reason, the pride of our free-will, and the vain confidence of our own righteousness!

Now all our glorying is in Jesus. For though by nature we are slaves to our lusts, in bondage to iniquity, our minds defiled, our consciences impure, and therefore to every good work reprobate; yet such was the love of Jesus to us, that "he gave himself for us. He hath redeemed us from all iniquity. He hath purified us unto himself as a peculiar people." So we become "zealous of good works." By the knowledge of faith, we are persuaded Jesus loves us, delights in us, grants us peculiar familiarity with himself, bestows peculiar blessings on us, and hath made peculiar provisions for us, both in time and eternity. Hence christians are inspired with a peculiar zeal to good works: A zeal according to Godliness. We love our God and only Saviour; therefore we delight to serve, and study to glorify him in our souls and bodies. Our sinful lusts and passions are contrary to him; therefore, as assisted, we daily strive and pray to mortify and subdue them.

To do good to the souls and bodies of all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith, is well-pleasing to the Lord; therefore it is the joy of our hearts to abound in those things. Here true zeal centers; that we do good from a good principle, love to God; from a good motive, Jesus hath commanded it; with a good aim, that the glory of his name, the honour and interest of his cause may be advanced in the world by us.

Such a zeal stabs the pride of self-seeking and vain-glorying. For our best works, our chiefest good is, to glorify our God and Saviour; therefore godly souls blush, and are grieved to the very heart when a thought arises of doing any good work to procure the favour of God, or to secure his love to our souls, or to intitle us to his kingdom. This is to glorify ourselves. No: but we have not so learned Christ; that were to oppose God's free-grace truths; dishonour a God of love; degrade the glory of our precious Saviour; for we give all the glory to him as having done all for us. We see salvation finished by him, and glory secured to us in him; therefore in love we desire to be wholly devoted to him, and to do those things that may glorify him only, "who hath bought us with his blood." 1 Cor. 6. 20.

Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Col. i. 12.

The Lord our God is a holy God. We can have no fellowship and communion with him here, nor enjoy him in glory hereafter, unless we are made like him in the spirit of our minds, and partake of his holiness. For all communion with an infinitely pure and holy being we are deprived of as sinners. Nor is it consistent with the purity of God to love us, or shew us mercy as sinful and impure beings, but through a Mediator. Here, even in Jesus, God and man unite, mercy and truth meet, righteousness and peace kiss. All fulness dwells in him to be communicated to his members. Out of his fulness they receive the knowledge of the Father's love, and the sanctifying influence of the holy Spirit.

Believers are made meet already in the sanctified disposition of their souls, therefore they are to be thankful for it now. They have no holiness but what is in and from Jesus their head; and they are expecting more and more out of his fulness. The source of every blessing flows from the Father's grace: The believer's plea and title to the inheritance, is what the beloved Son hath done for him. Not founded on what he has in himself, but his disposition to, and meetness for it, ariseth from what the divine Spirit works in him by the word of truth. The knowledge and evidence of this fills the soul with love and excites to gratitude. Was I God's enemy and my own foe? Was I satan's slave in love with sin and in bondage to my lusts? Did I live without God and Christ and hope in the world, cursed by the law and deserving wrath and hell?—And am I, O astonishing love! am I called by grace to the knowledge of the truth, to the feet of Jesus, to faith, to repentance, to remission of sins and to peace with God? Have I an heart to love God? to love what God loves, and hate what God hates? Is it my grief to offend, and the delight of my soul to please my God? Is it thus with me? What should be my employ below but praising the Lord and devoting myself, my all wholly to him till he calls me home? Verily so much the clearer we see our meetness for glory, so much the more shall we love the Lord. As we grow in this grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, so shall we increase with all the increase of God in the divine life. "O it will be our insatiable thirst on earth, to be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, till we are filled with all the fulness of God in glory." Eph. 3. 18, 19.

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 27. 13.

In times of sore distress and affliction, whether in soul or body, saints are taught many sweet lessons. Chastenings from the Lord, are all in love, and by them our God teaches the soul to profit. Though "no chastening for the present is joyous but grievous," and in the dark night of suffering, christians sigh out many a doleful strain, and sometimes according to all appearances, from nature, sense, feeling and the judgment of reason, they are ready to cry out, "All things are against me." Hence their courage sinks, their hopes and their hearts fail them, and they are ready to faint, but they have an invisible friend always near them who supports them by invisible power under all their trials and conflicts, supplies with comforting cordials and revives their spirits with the consolations of his word, and when he brings them out of their troubles how sweetly do they sing of him! how many a joyful psalm, what a rich treasury of experience, are we favour'd with from the pen of David, dipt in the ink of affliction; to the glory of his God and the comfort of his father's children in after ages! he believed, therefore he spake, and unless he had believed he had fainted.

Faith will support when all things else fail. Why so? because it looks to, depends upon, trusts in an almighty, faithful, covenant-keeping God. Faith consults not flesh and blood, but the word of grace and truth. By faith we endure every sight of affliction, every onset of the enemy, seeing him that is invisible. As faith is the support of the soul, so the object of faith Jesus, he is faith's author and strength. "Thy faith shall not fail," faith Jesus to Peter, "I have prayed for thee." It failed not as an abiding principle in the heart unto salvation; though it did in the confession of the lips. While the precious head is praying above, the dear members shall be kept in faith below. Though poor souls, through the enemy's power, the corruptions and rebellings of the flesh, may speak unadvisedly with their lips as David the psalmist, Psalm 116. 10, 11. "I was greatly afflicted, I said in my haste, all men are liars." But in their right mind, they give all glory to God, confess his goodness, and take shame to themselves for such base declarations, and from their own experience give sweet advice to their brethren. I had fainted unless I had believed. Therefore do thou "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait I say on the Lord."

Great God, thy glories shall employ
My holy fear, my humble joy;
My lips in songs of honour bring
The tribute to th' eternal King.

And will this glorious Lord descend
To be my Father and my Friend?
Then let my songs with angels join,
Heav'n is secure, for Christ is mine.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Solomon's Song 1. 2.

Such is the familiar loving language of chaste virgins espoused to Jesus. Love in the heart begets desires after tokens of affection from the object beloved. "Saw ye HIM whom my soul loveth?" asks the inquiring heart. "If ye have taken away HIM," saith sorrowful Mary. "That I may know HIM," saith affectionate Paul. "Let HIM kiss me," saith the church: As though all the world knew whom we mean, or who is our Beloved. Every heart that is blessed with the discovery of Jesus, will be excited with such desires after him.

Here is a very short and abrupt request: "Let him kiss me." That will make me quite happy. My heart is simple. I have but one object in view. O, if Jesus will but favour me with a love-token, all my fears will vanish, my scruples will be at an end, my doubts all silenced, and peace, happiness and joy shall possess my mind. So the love-allured heart reasons and prays: But sometimes delays excite impatience and promote jealousies, which issue in mourning surmises. Hope deferred, maketh the heart sick. "I fear he doth not love me, or sure he would hear and not delay, affording me sweet evidences and pledges of love." But so Jesus proves the soul's faith and steadfastness to him. So he draws out its importunity after him; "whom having not seen we love; and though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Pet. 1. 8.

Such is the language of faith. Where revealed love is received in the heart, sensible tokens will be longed after and shall be enjoyed. Nor can the believing heart rest satisfied, nor be truly happy without them. None but Christ, none but Christ! What are the smiles of the world, if Jesus frowns? What is life itself without his presence and favour? His presence creates a paradise. Nearness to him is heaven on earth. His cross is our glory. His kisses our comfort. "For thy love is better than wine." I have tasted both. I have felt the sweet effects of each. Experience hath taught that as wine revives and cheers the heart, so doth love. I cannot live without love. I cannot be happy without a sense of it. I cannot be holy, I cannot serve cheerfully, nor obey perfectly, nor conquer sin powerfully, but while love, thy love, O my beloved Jesus, inspires, enlivens and influences my heavy sluggish heart. Such sentiments possess the loving longing soul. O, this love is a precious plant. It springs not in nature's garden. It's original is divine. It comes from God. "For God is love." 1 John 4. 8.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Jer. 31. 3.

Thus the Lord speaks to his church, as to a collected body. Therefore ye members of Jesus, what foundation of comfort, what cause of rejoicing have you daily? But what doubts and scruples do often arise in your poor hearts concerning God's love to you? why is this? Because we judge of and determine the bounds of the love of our God from sense and feeling somewhat we find in ourselves, instead of abiding by the Lord's own gracious declaration in his word to us. How absurd would it be for us to judge of the dimensions of that glorious luminary the sun, by the little light and heat which we partake of? Shall we conclude, from the severe coldness we feel in winter's frost; or, in the sense of midnight darkness, that light and heat cease to exist in the sun? Alas, we may as well "measure the waters in the hollow of our hand, mete out the heaven with our span, weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," Isa. 40. 12. as to estimate and judge of the infinite boundless love of God to poor sinners in Christ Jesus from our perception and sense of it.

Dost thou, O soul, experience the drawing of thy heart to Jesus for righteousness, atonement, life and salvation? This is not of the will of the flesh, but of the power of God; the effects of his loving-kindness to thee. For "no man can come unto me, saith Jesus, except the Father draw him." John 6. 44. As the rays of light lead us to the source from whence they flow: so this stream of love, in time, instructs our souls in the most comfortable truth of God's everlasting love. To think, because I experience repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, I am obedient to the gospel of holiness, therefore, for these graces, now the Lord begins to love me. O but his love is of an earlier date. This is reversing God's method. And in times of darkness and desertion, and under Satan's buffetings, when thou hast no light to see thy graces, nor feeling sense of comfort in the exercise of them, this method of judging of God's love will be most distressing to thy poor soul. O may the Spirit of truth teach us to judge of God's love according to his own word of grace. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: and THEREFORE [for this cause] with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," from darkness to light, from the kingdom of sin and Satan into the kingdom of my dear Son. Glory shall crown what grace begun. What motive so powerful, what doctrine so influential, to animate and enliven the soul with fervent love and cheerful obedience, as the daily reflection and constant belief of the EVERLASTING LOVE of God towards us in Christ Jesus.

*As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word
that ye may grow thereby. 1 Pet. 2. 2.*

What I cannot comprehend shall never be the subject of my faith, is the weak language of a proud sceptic. Where I cannot comprehend, I silently adore: what I cannot explain, yet I humbly believe, because divine truths bear the impress, "The Lord hath spoken," is the language of an humble, gracious heart. "Marvellous are thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast thou made them all." Glorious is thy grace in Christ Jesus; in love hast thou revealed it to the children of men. Here is the wisdom of the saints, to learn from the images of nature the mysteries of grace. From the book of the former we are taught sweet and precious instructions in the latter. How kindly has the God of nature provided for the infant cry of the new-born babe? It soon discovers its wants; and if, as sensible of the provision it has brought, and its right unto it, it scarce breathes the air but it hunts for the breast of its parent, and its tender appetite is drawn out after the milk. No less pleased and delighted is the affectionate mother to administer to its wants and relieve its sorrows, and nourish and strengthen her new-born infant.

Dwelleth such love in parents to their offspring? Infinitely greater is the love of God to the babes in Christ. Dwelleth such a disposition in the babe of nature after milk? So also is this exemplified in every child of grace, in its love—love to and hunting after the milk of God's word. Hath the God of nature made such suitable provision for the children of this world? Glory to his grace! so hath he richly provided spiritual milk for the children of his kingdom. Desire it, saith he, and grow thereby. Feed on it, and be strengthened. But the Spirit of wisdom hath given us a caution to try the milk, to see that it be sincere milk: not any milk, but the milk, the pure and unmixt milk of God's word and truth. Jesus is the very essence and substance of it. If Jesus and the nourishing doctrines of God's everlasting love, election, pardon by his blood, and clothing by his righteousness, and final salvation of all his dear people through him, are omitted by ministers, they only administer skimmed milk, which will not nourish, edify and cause the soul to grow. All its rich qualities are extracted. Love the revealed word above all human teaching. Prize and attend upon the faithful ministers of Jesus, that thou mayest be "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine." 1 Tim. 4. 6.

Who delivered from so great a death, and doth deliver : in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us.

2 COR. I. 10.

Divine confidence is founded upon God's revealed truth. It arises in the heart in proportion to the discovery which is made to sinners of God's free-grace promises to them in Christ Jesus. Faith looks at nothing in nature nor in the creature; it stands not upon any human probability, or rational possibility, but, as the queen of graces, faith looks wholly to the King of glory; consults the word of truth, relies on the promises and oath of faithfulness, and trusts in the power of Omnipotence.

Past experience of former deliverances sweetly encourages the soul to trust God for future mercies. So the apostles reasoned upon temporal deliverances from the persecuting powers of earth and hell, which were engaged against them. All hope and help from the right hand and left were cut off. In themselves they had the sentence of death, and were like malefactors, in their own apprehension, doomed to certain execution. As the apostles had found and trusted to find temporal deliverances, past, present, and to come; so they taught and gloried in salvation, equally as extensive through all the periods of time, and which should issue in eternal glory.

Hence they set forth the everlasting love of God, preached a present sense of it through faith, and taught souls to expect the full fruition of it. Thus they preached "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Who, by the one-offering of himself, hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Heb. 10. 14. "hath fully atoned by his precious blood for all their sins, and hath made them the righteousness of God in him."

Such is the nature of that faith which glorifies God and comforts the hearts of his people. Thus the soul looks to, loves and delights in God, because it has received grace and peace from him who is, and who was, and who is to come. The more this faith grows and increases by the word of truth and the Spirit of power, it brings forth inward and outward fruits of righteousness, peace, love and joy.

Thus study daily, O soul, to live in an habitual view of thy God and Saviour. Pray and wrestle for constant applications of Jesus—daily feelings of his love by the Spirit; so shall every lust of thy nature be subdued, Satan shall fly from the resistings of faith—victory shall be obtained over the world—holiness will be delightful to thy heart—and heaven desirable and longed for by the soul. Ever remember, "it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, as the only enlivening confidence to encourage thee to work out thy salvation with fear and trembling." Phil. 2. 13.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

John 17. 17.

With what confidence and joy are we assured of our sanctification, from the prayer of Jesus on earth and his intercession in glory. Man cannot sanctify himself, it is the work of the Lord by the Spirit. He effects it by his sovereign power. Earth and hell shall not prevent it. O what a special mercy, not to be left to act with the generality of professors, who, like Pilate, demand "What is truth?" and then turn away from it as offensive, and hate and oppose it; and yet if there is kept up a great cry and vehement zeal for good works, holiness and sanctification, it is enough, no matter what principles they spring from. Nay under a pretence for these, truth is trampled under foot. But not so Jesus prayed, nor taught; nor are his members thus sanctified. Jesus is essentially the TRUTH. We are sanctified to God no other way than in him and by the faith of him. We are chosen from the beginning through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John 8. 32. saith Jesus: Free from the deceitful hopes and vain confidences that are natural to us. Souls, sanctified through the truth, are no longer left to deny the foundation truth of God's word—his sovereign, everlasting, electing love of sinners in Christ Jesus—the essential truth of their sins being atoned by the precious blood, and their persons clothed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus imputed to them—the certain perseverance, and sure glorification of every believing member of Christ. Thus our judgments are sanctified in truth, in opposition to the false notions of self-righteous and sinless perfection, which proceed from self-ignorance, the nature of God's law, and leave its professors under a fatal error. So, against the dream of universal redemption, which detracts from the glory of God by ascribing salvation to free-will, and also from a rejection of the imputed righteousness of Christ, which reduces the gospel of grace to a covenant of works.

Glory to our Lord, not only are we sanctified, as to a right JUDGMENT in all things, but our AFFECTIONS are also sanctified to love the truth and cleave to it; seeing all our hopes center in it, deriving all our comforts from it. It is the delight and joy of our souls to live in conformity to the truth. Jesus hath our heart. Fellowship with him is our heaven upon earth. What is contrary to that is hateful to us. Sin is become the burden, and holiness most pleasant to the sanctified soul.

To fancy thyself, perfectly freed from all sin, is a mark, not of a soul sanctified through the truth, but deceived by falshood and error. But daily to feel a holy striving, and earnest resisting all sin, fervent desires and longings after greater conformity to thy head, Jesus; and abiding in the truth of his word is a full proof of the sanctification of his Spirit.

By the grace of God I am what I am. 1 Cor.

15. 10.

It would be one great means of preventing complaints and murmuring, if christians hearts were more in meditation upon what they were, still are, and what they deserve. Such was the example of the once Jesus-persecuting, but afterwards Jesus-exalting Paul. The same grace that reached his heart has continued to run through the many revolving periods down to this day, and effects the same blessed work on poor sinners now. Therefore thou, O disciple of Jesus, hast the same cause as Paul had daily to sing of rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace—the eternal love, favour and good-will of God to thy soul in Christ Jesus.

Grace shines with resplendent lustre in the person of Jesus. Grace operates with sovereign irresistible power in the hearts of his members. Hence it triumphs over all the resisting powers, rebellious motives, carnal workings, and perverse obduracy of proud nature. Hell-deserving soul! what hast thou to boast of? wherein canst thou glory? Art thou converted to Jesus? Verily of this thou hast greatest cause of glory and triumph. But ever know the cause. Study daily to give all the glory, where it is only due, to the free favour of thy God. Wilt thou ever open the mouth of thy obedience, thy fulfilling terms and conditions, so as to obtain the prize? Ever know Jesus hath done all this. Hence grace freely flowed to thee. In the height of thy rebellion, in the depth of thy destruction the voice of eternal love spoke to thy soul, the power of almighty grace challenged thee as its blood-bought purchase, seized thee as its lawful captive, and snatched thee as a brand from the fire of destruction.

O wondrous love! should not amazement strike thy heart, and the fire of love and gratitude ever burn in thy soul? what shall we say to these things? but grace, that dwelt in the heart of God from eternity, hath sovereignly reached thy heart in time. Therefore art thou turned to Jesus by repentance? hast remission of sins through faith in his blood? This is given by the exalted Prince of grace and peace to thine heart. Hast thou a love to holiness, and a hatred to sin? This is contrary to nature, and is given through the grace of the Spirit. “By the grace of God I am what I am,” is the confession of saints in earth. By the grace of God I am where I am, is the triumphant song of saints in heaven.

’Tis not by works of righteousness,
Which our own hands have done;
But we are sav’d by sovereign grace,
Abounding thro’ God’s Son.

’Tis from meer mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin:
’Tis by the water and the blood,
Our souls are wash’d from sin.

Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. Luke 5. 5.

Whatever one engages in, success gives pleasure, but disappointment causes dejection. The passing over of a black cloud is often followed by the brighter shining of the sun. Naturalists observe it is always darkest just before the break of day. So here these poor fishermen had toiled through a tedious night of disappointment; not one fish came to net: Yet, at Christ's word they let down the net; and behold the event, the greatest success they ever met with succeeded their fruitless toil: their nets were too weak to hold the miraculous draught of fishes they had taken. O how adorable is Jesus' power and Godhead!

The occupation of a fisherman is not unlike that of the christian's vocation. It is his employ to fish in the wide and deep ocean of God's eternal love and grace, revealed in his word of truth; and what he taketh here he liveth upon day by day. It may be sometimes the christian toils through a dark night of disappointment; and takes nothing which may refresh his spirit and rejoice his soul: Here "patience must have its perfect work." Not one, nor many nights bad success makes the fisherman quit his trade, and forsake his calling. So the christian should consider he has need of patience, that after he has done the will of God he might receive the fulfilment of the promises. They are the blessed encouragements for him to fish on the great and wide sea of God's covenant love and faithfulness. In his word are blessings innumerable. Ever remember, "He that believeth shall not make haste." That is, be in a hurry and confusion, as one in surprise and fear in time of trouble. Though God's mercies are not styled swift, yet they are called "sure mercies." Isa. 55. 3. Where the grace of faith is in the front, perseverance shall be in the centre, and glory shall bring up the rear; and the soul thirsting after comfort, shall in God's time be refreshed with the plentiful showers of heavenly consolation.

Some souls have been so filled herewith, even like these disciples nets that broke with the great draught of fishes, that they have cried out, "Lord, stay thine hand; my brittle vessel can hold no more." Live upon the word of God's truth, and thou shalt be sure to enjoy the comforts of God's faithfulness: Whatever fails, his word is sure, his promises certain, his covenant immutable, his oath irrevocable to every soul who has "fled to Jesus for refuge, lay hold on the hope set before him." Heb. 6. 18.

Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Psalm 37. 24.

The absolute declarations and promises of scripture, are ever to be considered as having relation to, and dependence upon the covenant of grace. Hence whatever is asserted concerning the salvation of lost sinners, it is an exhibition or display of the grace of the covenant by Jesus Christ. When men see not the nature of the covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure, they make the promises of the gospel, as it were, a mere rope of sand, and instead of salvation being established upon the sure foundation of God's immutable love and faithfulness, it is made to depend on human wisdom, power, and goodness. Poor comfort for sensible souls; though pride for a time may keep up the vain hopes of the self-righteous and self-deluded. The just man's standing is of God's power. His falls are from his own frailty. That he is raised from his falls, is from the sovereign love and covenant faithfulness of the Lord his God. But is not God able to keep us from falling? doubtless his power is almighty, he can take away all sin and corruption out of us, and suffer no temptation from satan, the world and the flesh ever to attack us, yea he could instantly change us into angelical purity.

But this is not his will. The Lord sees it is most for his glory that we should be what we are, believe his truth, live upon his promises, rely on his power from day to day, or it should be otherwise. All things are in being for the elect's sake, and are all caused to "work together for their good." Rom. 8. 28. Satan may tempt Christ to cast himself down to prove the power of God; carnal hearts may say, then "let us do evil that good may come." Each shew what spirit they are of and are influenced by. Saints express the inward frame and disposition of their souls by other language. Gracious words proceed from gracious hearts, which are influenced by divine truth and everlasting love. Their falls are suffered to humble them for sin, wean them from the pride of their nature, and their own self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, to deaden them to the love of the world, and to endear Jesus more and more to them, to teach them the usefulness of ordinances, to exercise their graces, to purge out their dross, to enable them to succour others with the assurance of comfort and protection, which they themselves have found from our Saviour to demonstrate the wisdom, power and faithfulness of a covenant God, to make them meet for glory and cause them to long more for the heavenly inheritance. Saints may fall, and do fall into many things that hurt and bruise them. This is their shame, and causeth sorrow and grief to them, and excites to watchfulness: But fallin to hell they cannot, they shall not, because they are upheld by the arm of Omnipotence. That is their comfort and glory, therefore they sweetly go on leaning upon their beloved. Cant. 8. 5.

If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. Matt. 27. 42.

Our blessed Lord was not only crucified between two thieves, but was also surrounded on the cross, and mocked and derided by the very worst sort of thieves, the chief priests, scribes and elders. These professing ministers and servants of Jehovah did their utmost to rob the Prince of life and Lord of glory of that honour, which is ever due unto him, of being our Saviour; and, like thieves and robbers, they would enter his kingdom some other way. Verily he is the King of all his spiritual Israel. Every subject of his love will bow to the sovereignty of his grace, the sceptre of his love, glory only in his despised cross, and rejoice that Jesus rules in and reigns over him. Most true, this way of salvation is contrary to the wisdom of the flesh, the reasonings of corrupt nature, and the pride of boasted FREE-WILL. These, by how much the more they are assisted by human learning, are so much the more strengthened and fortified against this self-denying truth, Salvation by free grace, through the cross of a despised Jesus. "Their wisdom and their knowledge had perverted them," says Isaiah, chap. 47. 10. or they would not have said, "Let him now come, and we WILL believe." Poor proud creatures, free-will is ever the same. Where it reigns it always exalts the creature, and opposes the sovereignty of God. It prescribes methods of conviction, and refuses to submit to those of infinite wisdom. Through a life of thirty years Jesus had afforded them the fullest conviction to their senses, and they believed not on him; neither would their hearts have been persuaded though he had come down from the cross; yea though he rose again from the dead. They resisted the fullest evidence, therefore they remained inexcusable, and were destitute of the power of the Spirit, giving the inward knowledge and glory of Jesus.

Outward miracles and wonders may surprise the senses, but cannot work faith, saving faith in the heart. Pride ever reigns in unregenerate hearts, and nothing but sovereign grace can subdue it. Even in hell the notion of free-will prevails. "Nay, but (said Dives) if one went to them from the dead they WILL repent." Luke 16. 30.

Humble souls are thankful for the gift of precious faith in a precious Christ. They know it is not of themselves that they believe. Therefore they adore and love "the author and finisher of faith," and own it is given of distinguishing love and sovereign grace. Thus all glorying in the flesh is cut off. By faith we rejoice in the truth, and glory in Jesus only. Who, O who can describe the infinite obligation every disciple of Jesus is under to love and glorify the ever-loving and ever-adorable Trinity!

To them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called : Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied. Jude, ver. 1, 2.

One frequently meets with poor trembling souls, who are just enlightened by the Holy Spirit, who see their misery, and feel their wretchedness as sinners, and flee to Christ for hope; yet their poor hearts are greatly distressed with fear, lest they should perish in their sins, and never obtain the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls: But that is impossible. But they do not at present see the glorious order of the covenant; nor consider the certain security of all them that are effectually called by the Word and Spirit to the knowledge of Christ. For this is a consequence of their being sanctified, or separated and set apart by God the Father, as the objects of his everlasting love. And as God loves them as his jewels, so he is careful to preserve them; he well knew and clearly foresaw the miserable effects sin would bring on them, therefore he chose them in Christ Jesus, and committed them into his hands; and they are kept and preserved safe and secure—not from sin: alas! they are in themselves sinners—by nature “children of wrath even as others.” And to their after shame and sorrow, many of them run dreadful lengths in sin before their conversion; and like Paul, are mad against Jesus, the way of salvation by him, and the holiness of his Spirit. But still, as with the people of old, God bears with their manners. The long-suffering of the Lord is salvation. He is not willing that any one of them should perish, but that all of them should come to repentance; therefore they are preserved in Christ Jesus.

Disciple of Jesus, canst thou not look back on thy past life and see thy many, many narrow escapes from death? How many dangers hast thou been delivered from, when one hair's breadth has been between thee and eternity? O hadst thou died in thy unregenerate state of sin and unbelief, how couldst thou have escaped the damnation of hell! But impossible this. Thou wast preserved in Christ Jesus, therefore every snare of death has been broken. Thou wast immortal till the Spirit called thee. Think of this, and be humbled. Reflect on the love of thy God, rejoice and give him all the glory. Thou hast not only been preserved from death and hell, but art called to life and salvation by Jesus. His life is thy righteousness, his blood is thy redemption, his intercession thy salvation. And what awaits thee now? Mercy from God the Father, peace in Christ Jesus, love from the blessed Spirit; such, such is the happy portion of all the called. May this be multiplied more and more upon thee day by day! Such is the doctrine, such the prayer of Jude, the servant of Jesus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of truth.

Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good-pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12. 32.

When poor sinners are converted to Jesus, they become little in their own eyes, and they see but few, comparatively, who follow the Lamb. Their former friends turn their enemies. Their former hopes are cut off. They know their own strength to be perfect weakness; and they feel the burden of a body of sin and death. Hence their poor hearts are often exercised with anxious cares and distressing fears. Their Saviour knows this; therefore he speaks to them in love, forbids their fears, and administers the most reviving draught of consolation.

Ye children, consider your dignity as adopted sons of God. Call to mind your honourable state, heirs of a kingdom, heirs of God the King of kings, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ your elder Brother. Though at present ye are in a state of exile. The world knows you not. Your kindred after the flesh despise you. Carnal professors revile and persecute you. Satan is enraged to tempt and accuse you. Yea and your worst foes are most nearly allied to you, the flesh, with its corruptions and lusts, sin and unbelief. Yet, faith the Head, in glory, to his conflicting members on earth, "Fear not." Why, what consideration can dispel the anxious fears, and alleviate the corroding cares of drooping disciples? Nothing like the good-pleasure of the Father: the eternal purposes of his grace, the immutable design of his love. A kingdom is prepared for you: Earth, with all its power; sin, with all its malignity; hell, with all its rage and malice, shall not deprive you of your Father's patrimony. O disciple, how does this heighten the mercy, and secure the inheritance! It is a free gift by Jesus Christ.

Poor soul, thou art fearing about thy interest in and title to the kingdom of glory. Verily, thou canst find nothing in thyself to give thee a right thereto. But the Saviour plainly assures thee, it is of "the Father's good-pleasure." What power can avert that? Hast thou an heart to seek the kingdom? dost thou believe in, and follow the Lamb? dost thou see somewhat in Jesus which attracts thy affections? and is the desire of thy soul after him, and to the remembrance of his name? Then hath the glory of the kingdom, in the Spirit, shined upon thine heart.

No marvel sin is thy grief and burden, while Jesus is the delight and hope of thy soul. May it suffice to quiet and still thy soul, that the Father's gift is sure! And so is the way also; it is by Jesus: and "through much tribulation thou [and all the heirs] must enter into the kingdom." Acts 14. 22.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. Psalm 110. 3.

When sovereign grace reacheth the heart, it casts out that son of the bond-woman, natural free-will. This had long usurped the throne, and subjected the poor sinner to nothing but evil. Yet all the while the poor soul vainly boasted of his liberty, though he was a servile slave to the worst of drudgery. Free indeed to do evil; but to do good without power. But because of the free-will offering of Jesus, his members are made willing by the Spirit to come to Jesus as their only hope; and hence they bring free-will offerings with holy worship.

Thus Jehovah the Father speaks to the Son of his love, and gives a glorious display of the effects of everlasting election and covenant love, under the energy of the divine Spirit. See, believer, behold and adore the equal love of the glorious Trinity! Is thy WILL towards Jesus? is the language of thy heart, "none but Jesus, all other saviours I disclaim?" Verily where this WILL is given by the Spirit in a day of power, the affections are attracted to Jesus in the beauties of holiness. Dost thou not love the sceptre of his love to rule over thee, as well as the atonement of his blood to obtain thy pardon? These are inseparable. Let no soul deceive himself. Every believer is washed in the blood of Jesus, and made a priest unto God; and as the high-priest under the law "put on the breast-plate of judgment, the urim and thummim," *Exod. 28. 30.* so every anointed one is endued with LIGHT and PERFECTION—the light of the knowledge of Jesus, and the perfection of grace which dwells in him, is communicated to his members. Hence in the exercise of faith their souls obey him willingly, serve him cheerfully, and delight in Jesus continually.

This is a soul-affecting consideration, all is of grace; conceived in the womb of the morning of eternity, and its rich profusion freely poured forth in time—shed forth like the pearly dew upon the vegetable creation, which produces its verdure, refreshment, and fruits.

So, disciple, all thy mercies come from above. Freely thou hast received an understanding to know, a will to choose, and affections to cleave unto Jesus: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Do thou take all the shame of thy sinful free-will and nature-state to thyself, and be humbled: "But unto God the things that are God's." By his grace "I am what I am;" should be thy daily confession, and this the sweet exercise of thy grateful heart, to glory in the Lord alone, and devote thyself to his service. "Ye are not your own." *1 Cor. 6. 19.*

Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.
1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

How dear is every believer to God the Father, to Jesus the Saviour and to the Spirit the Comforter ! Each person claims a property in him : the Father by election ; the Son by redemption ; the Holy Spirit by inhabitation. How should this, O soul, call forth thy love, excite to gratitude, inflame with affection, and quicken thee to glorify the Lord thy God ! Consider daily, thou art not thine own, but a son and servant of the great God and thy Saviour. Though thou wert given to him, in love by the Father, yet reflect upon the price he paid for thy redemption. Thou art bought with blood, with blood divine : Blood spilt on the accursed tree, in direful agony and shameful death. So thy Saviour bought thee at the hands of justice, paid the utmost farthing of thy debt to law, delivered thee from the hands of Satan, and snatched thee as a brand from the jaws of death and hell.

Now thou art called by the word and Spirit to be the Lord's freeman ; or, as a chaste virgin, thou art espoused to Jesus, and in faith hast plighted thy troth ; hast voluntarily given thyself, hand and heart, to be thy Lord's. What then is thy duty ? what infinite obligations art thou under to forsake all other lovers, and to cleave to thy Lord alone with full purpose of heart ! Dost thou believe thy vile body shall shortly be sown in the silent grave, that it shall certainly be raised a glorious body like unto thy Saviour's ? How much doth it concern thee to devote that body to his service and glory on earth, which shall reign with Jesus in heaven ! Is thy body the temple of the Holy Ghost ? canst thou reflect on its dignity, and debase and pollute it with filthy lusts ? God forbid ! Doth thy spirit enjoy sweet fellowship and communion with the Father and his Son Jesus through the Spirit the Comforter ? doth the Spirit itself bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God ? Where is thy love to the truth as it is in Jesus ? where is thy zeal for his cause and interest ? Remember whose thou art. Be concerned to live up to thy privilege and dignity. Be earnest in prayer for power to obey the obligations which infinite and eternal love hath laid thee under, to glorify thy Lord in thy body and spirit which are his.

What shall we pay th' eternal Son,
That left the heav'n of his abode,
And to this wretched earth came down
To bring us wand'ers back to God !

Our everlasting love is due
To him that ransom'd sinners lost,
And pity'd rebels when he knew
The vast expence his love would cost.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. Rom. 13. 11.

It is an affecting case, but a real truth, that the wise virgins are apt to slumber and sleep as well as the foolish. Through the pressures of a body of sin and death, and the opiates of worldly ease and self-indulgence, they sometimes fall into a drowsy state and a sleepy frame of soul. Hence they lose their former delight in religious duties and spiritual exercises. Their love to God and their brethren in Christ grows cold; their zeal for the glory of Jesus and his precious truths is abated. The enemy takes great advantages against them, and would triumph in their intire destruction. But that can never be, for "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," the Lord prevents it. Will the loving father suffer his dear children to sleep in their beds till devoured by raging flames? and if we being evil have such love for our children, how infinitely greater is the love of our heavenly Father? Therefore he hath many ways to alarm souls and awaken them to duty and watchfulness. Thus Paul, his faithful watchman, lifts up his voice of warning, cries the hour, and reproves disciples as acting unbecoming. It being both unreasonable and unseasonable for them who know the time of day to indulge sloth and heaviness. It is high time to awake out of sleep. Come, christian, look around thee, look up. The Saviour reigns. It is broad day, see the sun shining; nay it is in its meridian, and thou art just got to thy journey's end. "Just in sight of thy Father's house. Thy Lord is coming to meet thee, and what, sleep on now and take thy rest! The Spirit speaks to thee in his word, "Now is thy salvation nearer than when thou first believed." The Lord is at hand. "Let thy moderation [in care after the things of this world] be known unto all men." What art thou grasping so much of perishing things for? Thou canst not hold them long. Offhands, before death, make thee quit thy hold. Think what thou art spiritually born for and called to, and art just going to take possession of. Verily, if thy soul is broad awake, thou seest things as they really are. TIME, with all its toys, and pleasures how short! ETERNITY, with all its rich glories, and inestimable blessings, how long! Jesus, with all his endearing amiableness, in his adorable person, precious offices, blessed promises, and glorious work and accomplishments for thee, as the best object of all thy hope, love, peace and joy. For shame sleep not, when the delightful presence, sweet enjoyment, and heavenly fellowship of such a friend and companion may be enjoyed. If thou hast lost the sense of this by sleep, O resolve with the church, "I will give no sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eye-lids, until I find the Lord." Psalm 132. 4, 5.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong. 1 Cor. 16. 13.

Believers in the Lord Jesus are partakers of an everlasting salvation on earth. No enemy can deprive them of the full enjoyment of it in glory; because "they are kept by the mighty power of God; but then we are daily to consider it is "through faith." 1 Pet. 1. 5. Do we believe in the atonement of Jesus' blood? do we rely on the perfection of his righteousness? Why so? Because the word of the Lord is the warrant for our faith. Hence, O soul, the exhortations from the same word to duty are equally binding on thy belief and practice. The same Lord who has saved us from our enemies, calls us to watchfulness against them. Jesus, who is gone to prepare a place for us in glory, directs us how to demean ourselves in the way to it. Shall the christian soldier neglect the command of the captain of his salvation, when the glory of God and the peace and comfort of his own soul is concerned? Surely not.

Through watchfulness many evils are prevented, many blessings enjoyed. When a christian is off his guard, or asleep when he should watch, how is he exposed to the attacks and temptations of the enemy! it is for our good that the Lord has commanded it as our duty. It is through his power that hereby the good soldier of Jesus Christ is enabled to stand fast in the profession, power and comfort of faith. It was the rejoicing of St. Paul in the views of death, that he had kept the faith, 2 Tim. 4. 7. Would we enjoy the same comfort? we shall strive in the strength of the Lord to follow his example—to check the risings of unbelief—to oppose the workings of carnal reason—to resist stedfastly in the faith the subtle devices of satan. This is our duty and wisdom, so shall we quit ourselves like men, men of valour and courage. Like the victorious saints of old, "who overcame every enemy through the blood of the Lamb." Droop not, O believer, thy strength is the Lord's omnipotence. Lift up thy head with boldness, thine enemies are vanquished by a conquering Jesus. Be strong, look off thyself, look to the strong for strength. Look unto Jesus continually, rely only on the power of his might hourly, his arm is not shortened. The reliance of faith engages his power, the cry of faith obtains victory. There is an open and effectual door, by which thou shalt enter into glory; but thou must fight thy way through. Consider daily this is our motto, "MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH JESUS WHO HATH LOVED US." Rom. 8. 37.

Dear Lord, my thankful heart receives	I am my Love's, and he is mine,
The hope thine invitation gives:	Our hearts, our hopes, our passions join;
To thee my joyful lips shall raise	Nor let a motion, or a word,
The voice of prayer, the voice of praise.	Nor thought arise to grieve my Lord.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Matt. 5. 8.

Every institution of purification under the law referred to Jesus the Purifier of his people. The Old-Testament saints received inward purity of heart from the same Fountain, Jesus; and through the same means, faith in him. Without this inward purity of heart, without holiness, no man ever did or ever shall see the Lord. When Jesus comes to his temple, even the hearts of his people, he "sits as a refiner and purifier." Sinners are the objects of his love; sin is the accursed thing his soul hates; from this he purifies them. In purity and holiness his soul delights: With this he blesses his disciples, and then pronounces them blessed; and tells them wherein their happiness consists: Blessed are you whose hearts are pure: blessed are your eyes, for they shall see God.

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" of fallen Adam's race, Job 14. 4. Such power belongeth to God only. Man contributeth nothing hereto. But man, believing, regenerate man, is the blessed subject of purity and holiness of heart. Therefore, though no glory is due to him, yet holy blessed effects flow from it to God his Saviour's glory, to his present felicity, and to his eternal comfort and joy. To thy shame, disciple, thou knowest, being a child of an apostate sinful parent, naturally sin was the delight and joy of thine heart. It is thy present blessedness, that being a child of a holy God, a member of the holy Jesus, a subject of the Holy Spirit's new creating influence, and a partaker of holy precious faith; it is natural to thy holy new-born heart to love holiness, as agreeable to the perfections of thy God and Saviour, as also as it is suitable to thy present state of blessedness in Christ Jesus. Yea, whence those sighs and sorrows at finding the Canaanites still in the land? whence those groans and prayers because sin dwelleth in the flesh? whence those importunate cries and longing requests to Jesus for total victory and perfect freedom from this troublesome inmate? whence that holy joy and sweet complacency in bringing forth "the fruits of holiness? Come they not hence, that thou art united to a holy Jesus—thy heart is purified by faith—thou hast a heart cleansed from all sin by Christ's blood? A new heart and right spirit is put within thee. Thou dost see God in Christ now as thy covenant God. Thou hast received covenant blessings from him. Rejoice in him. Shortly thou shalt see him and enjoy him in his kingdom and glory.

Bless'd are the men of broken heart,
Who mourn for sin with inward smart.
The blood of Christ divinely flows,
A healing balm for all their woes.

Bless'd are the pure, whose hearts are
clean
From the defiling pow'r of sin;
With endless pleasure they shall see
A God of spotless purity.

Righteousness delivereth from death. Prov. 11. 4.

When a poor sinner is brought to judge of himself according to the word of truth, then is he truly wise. When he sees the exceeding sinfulness of sin, he is humbled before the Lord. When he considers "the wages of sin is death," he is in fear and trembling. But when he is enabled to believe he is righteous in the sight of God, then he is truly happy—his soul rejoiceth because his eyes have seen the salvation of God; and he hath found a righteousness that delivers from death. It is never well with the soul but when in simplicity and godly sincerity it forms its judgment of sin and righteousness from the word of the Lord; for carnal reason and fleshly wisdom perverts and draws it aside from the truth as it is in Jesus. Sin is a transgression of the law: which is holy, just, and good. "The wages of sin is death." Verily then I am a sinner, and have need to cry daily, "God be merciful to me!" Lord, deliver my soul from death! What is righteousness but a perfect obedience to the law of God? I have no righteousness in myself. I have sinned, and a sinner righteous in himself is a contradiction in terms.

But here is our mercy, as by man sin entered into the world, and death as the curse of sin, so by man came righteousness; and as a blessing of it, deliverance from death. Where can we turn our eyes? to whom can we look for this righteousness, this blessing, this deliverance, but to the Man, Mediator, Surety, and Representative of his people, Jesus? he is emphatically styled "the Righteous." 1 John 2. 1. This is the comfortable testimony the Spirit of truth bears of Jesus, "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we (who have no righteousness in ourselves) might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5. 21. So the righteous Jehovah, who loveth righteousness, and whose countenance beholds the thing that is just, is well pleased with the members of Jesus; for they are clothed with his righteousness—the Lord laid their sins upon Jesus—the Lord imputes the righteousness of Jesus to them without works of theirs. So he delivers them from deserved death—so he justifies them in righteousness unto life eternal.

Here is thy happiness, O believer! it is thy joyful privilege thus to judge of thyself. To live in this view of thyself is agreeable to the truth of God's word; it is witnessed to thy soul by the Comforter, through faith. This makes the soul joyful in truth—this animates to all holy obedience in love, gives confidence in prayer, comfort in life, deliverance from death, and boldness at the awful bar of judgment. "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Isa. 54. 17.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which you are called in one body; and be ye thankful.
Col. 3. 15.

Every exhortation in the word of grace implies a contrary disposition in the fallen nature of saints. Because thou hast turbulency and disorder in thy flesh, therefore art thou, believer, called upon by the word to oppose it in the grace of the Spirit. Here is thy daily exercise. We shall surely meet with many things from within and without, which are contrary to the peace of our minds and the comfort of our hearts. Thou, O man of God, art to flee these things. Watch against them; pray for victory over them. Thou hast the most powerful excitements hereto. Jesus hath made peace by the blood of his cross, and every disciple is called to the knowledge and enjoyment of it through faith.

Hence the hand-writing of the law of accusation is cancelled in the mind, sin is dethroned in the heart, the clamours of conscience silenced, and sweet peace with God inwardly felt. Dost thou, soul, possess this happy state? what then shall be the umpire? what the determining rule of thy conduct? Look to the word of truth, so shall thy outward actions be governed right.

PEACE with God is the fruit of everlasting love. Its root was planted in the eternal counsel; it blossoms and bears fruit in the life and death of Jesus, and poor sinners reap the sweet heart-felt sense of it by faith. Nothing can destroy this heavenly plant; but many things may cause it to droop and wither in sense and experience. Let the peace of God rule. Hence it is plain that thou art exposed to many things which may prevent its ruling, which are to be guarded against. While it rears its head, and the peace of God rules in the heart, its natural influence is to follow peace with all men. Yea the peaceful soul embraces every member of the Prince of peace in the open arms of faith and love. And canst thou barter the enjoyment of this rich gem of thy Redeemer's crown, for the gratifications of unbridled passion, unchristian resentment, undue revenge against thy brother! Hath thy Lord dealt so with thee? has this been the rule of the meek Lamb's conduct? Thou knowest otherwise. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves." Yes: avenge thyself on the enemy of thy peace, O disciple, thy pride, which is the cause of anger and passion. Here fix all thy indignation. Against this be fired with a holy resentment. A sense of anger will hinder thy prayers. Resentment will shut up thy spirit against gratitude and thankfulness to thy God. And when this sweet sacrifice is not offered from the heart, the smoke of corruption may cloud the mind and darken the soul. Remember thy calling, and study to walk worthy of it. Ephes. 4. 1.

And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Luke 10. 42.

What the Lord said of Aaron's rod, Numb. 17. 5. "And it shall come to pass that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom;" this is true of the hearts of all his elect people in Christ Jesus. To see a dead withered stick, cut off from the root, bring forth blossoms, is a miracle in nature. So when the soul of a once dead sinner shoots forth the blossoms of affection, and chooses Jesus as its portion and happiness, and brings forth fruits of holiness; this is a miracle of grace.

The love of Jesus to his people was not only conceived in his heart, but was manifested in his life and death. So when our hearts are made acquainted with the love of Jesus it cannot be hid. When Jesus is chosen as our treasure, our affections cleave to him, we follow him, our delight is to hear his voice, to sit at his feet, and attend upon the gracious words which have dropt from his lips. Blessed be his name, he indulges his people now with spiritual real communion with him, though we enjoy not his bodily presence. This is our heaven upon earth. But it differs from the heaven of glory in this; because here are many things that interrupt our constant enjoyment of Jesus—satan envies it—the flesh lusteth against it—the world, with its profits and pleasures, tends to allure us from it. And indeed the poor heart is oft times ready to fear it shall lose Jesus' grace and salvation. Though, like MARY, the soul hath chosen the good part in time, yet doubts of the enjoyment of its portion in a blissful eternity. But that is impossible; because Jesus is God, and it is impossible for God to lie.

The same grace which was effectual in Mary's heart, influences the heart of every disciple to the same choice; therefore what Jesus said to her in the days of his flesh, is wrote by his Spirit for our consolation and establishment in faith and love. Mary displayed the greatness of her soul in being satisfied with no object short of Jesus, the humility of her heart in sitting at his feet. Poor doubting fearing believer, thy choice of Jesus is the effect of God's choosing thee in Jesus; therefore thy good part, thy happy choice, shall never be taken from thee; but thou shalt soon hear the voice of thy Beloved, saying, "Come up hither." Where I am, there shall my servants be.

Thus saith the wisdom of the Lord,
Bless'd is the man that hears my word;
Keeps daily watch before my gates,
And at my feet for mercy waits.

The soul that seeks me shall obtain
Immortal wealth and heav'nly gain;
Immortal life is his reward;
In love and favour of his Lord.

Y y

Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John i. 3.

What astonishing grace! what wonder of love is this! Sinners of a mortal race enjoy this glorious privilege of close fellowship and intimate communion with the infinitely holy and glorious Jehovah. This is our highest felicity below. Here we admire, adore and love. Angels behold it with wonder. They rejoice at our conversion to it: But this fills with rage and fires with malice the infernal spirits. They hate the truth, and oppose and resist all in their power our knowledge and enjoyment of it.

Marvel not, O christian, if on this account the world hate you. "Ye know it hated me, saith our Lord, before it hated you." But why was Jesus so hated by the world? Why are all his disciples so hateful to the world? It is from that enmity which the God of this world hath to the truth of the everlasting gospel of grace, and by this enmity he influences all his children. Think not, believer, the world hates you merely for your living soberly, righteously and godly in the world. No. Who made greater pretensions to this than the Pharisees of old, and yet who were more carested and esteemed by the world than they? The world will love its own. But if you are brought into fellowship with the man Christ Jesus by the Spirit and word of truth, and the Father of all grace through the Son, satan the adversary to the truth, with all his legion of spirits and men, will fight against you with implacable hatred. If satan is not acquainted with your sweet fellowship, yet he knows you are not delighted with having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; therefore he is against you. But as God and his children have fellowship and communion with each other in "the truth as it is in Jesus," as the love of God is the source and spring of it, and the Spirit of truth brings us to the knowledge and enjoyment, therefore he will preserve and maintain it in believing souls, in spite of all its enemies here.

This divine Comforter "shall abide with you for ever," saith our Lord. Nor will he leave us, till, through the testimony of Jesus and the word of his grace, we are conquerors over every enemy, when we shall come to the perfect uninterrupted enjoyment of God and the Lamb above, then faith shall be turned into sight, hope into fruition, and love shall attain its highest accomplishment in glory.

One day spent in the place

Where my dear Lord is seen,

Is sweeter than ten thousand days

Of pleasurable sin.

My willing soul would stay

In such a frame as this;

And sit and sing herself away

To everlasting bliss.

That we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us. Heb. 6: 18.

Jesus is the only hope for lost and perishing sinners : to him the heirs of promise fly : in him they find a refuge safe and secure from every danger. Like the man-slayer under the law, who was in danger of death on every side, and no way of safety and protection but in the city of refuge, which God had appointed for his retreat. Here his life was safe ; the law of God was his protection ; no one durst presume to take vengeance on him. Such was God's mercy to persons under these circumstances. But how infinitely superior are the settlements of grace ? here the salvation of the soul, eternal life and glory are secured. And glory to the rich grace of our God, a present refuge, a present hope, is set before us ; and strong consolation to be enjoyed by us now.

Are the eyes of our understanding enlightened, that we may see Jesus, who is the hope of our calling ? are we sensible of the insufficiency of every other hope ? have we fled from every refuge of lies to Jesus, and laid hold on him by faith as our only hope ? This is by the love and grace of the holy Spirit ; and he maintains his precious office as a Comforter to us, and according to the word of grace and truth he administers strong consolation, spiritual refreshments to our souls. And this from the object Jesus, and from the " immutability of God's counsel, and the confirmation of his oath ;" which centers in him. What unspeakable mercy is this ! See thy distinguishing grace, O believer, and rejoice, not only safe but happy—not only secure but joyful.

This is grace upon grace. Not only glory in reversion, but grace in possession. You see your calling, brethren, and the riches of your inheritance with all saints. These are your strong holds, ye prisoners of hope. Though imprisoned in a body of sin and death, exposed to unbelieving doubts and fears, liable to sore trials and conflicts with thine adversary satan, yet ever consider this, nothing but consolation, strong consolation awaits you in Christ Jesus. There is your constant refuge, your only hope : " Abide in me," saith the Lamb. He would have us be simple of heart ; so shall we be joyful in Spirit ; for verily if we look to any other object but Jesus we shall smart for it. We can draw comfort from no other ; but in Jesus we can triumph with joy ; and challenge with confidence, " Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifies, who shall condemn ? it is Christ that died."

Hosanna to Christ's bounteous love,
For such delights below ;

And yet he feeds his saints above
With nobler blessings too.

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. Matt. 26. 56.

On reading this what disciple of Jesus can refrain crying out, "Lord, what is man!" What danger am I in! Lord, keep me! What awful effects have a fit of fear and a frame of unbelief produced? Here was the beloved disciple John, who lay in the bosom of Jesus, bold and courageous Peter, who was to die with him, the ambitious James who requested to sit at our Saviour's right hand in his kingdom; with every one of the rest of the disciples, forsaking and flying from innocence and distress. The Shepherd was seized, and the poor affrighted sheep were instantly scattered. Provoking ingratitude! If Jesus had chosen them, and continued to love them on condition of their conduct and behaviour towards him, this instance was sufficient to turn his love to hatred, his election of them into reprobation, and casting them off for ever.

If our dear Saviour was to judge of and determine the state of his disciples from their outward conduct and appearances, as we too, too oft do by ourselves, might he not reason thus concerning them: "What treachery and deceit have I met with from these wretches? A few minutes ago, while in my greatest agonies, they were destitute of the least sympathizing spirit, indulged their flesh in sleep, instead of granting one friendly request to watch with me one hour, though thrice awaked by me yet they shewed no regard for me. At supper they all promised to go to prison and death with me. Here is one rash fellow hath cut off an ear, and now upon the very first sight of danger, as though they had all combined together, they are ALL fled away from me; and by and by the most daring of them all, will, with horrid oaths and curses, deny that he knows me." And might we not expect to hear our Lord's sentence, "Cut them asunder, and divide them their portion with hypocrites?" It must be so if salvation rested upon terms and conditions. But no; grace reigns. Astonishing as their ingratitude, highly provoking as their conduct was to him, yet more astonishing his love, and higher his mercy surmounts than all their miscarriages. Hence, amazing to read, the very first message he sends is full of love, and fraught with affection, "Love covers a multitude of sins." Not one word of upbraidings; but, "Go and tell my brethren, &c." Surely, O Jesu, never was love like thine! What! brethren still? Yes; the bond of union, the dear relation still subsists between the first-born and all his brethren; nor sin, nor death, nor hell, shall ever destroy it. But, O christian, under sense of ingratitude to and forsaking of thy Saviour, what wounds so deep as love? what humiliation of soul, what godly sorrow, what repenting does the power of love kindle in the heart?

Charity shall cover a multitude of sins. 1 Pet. 4. 8.

Many sinners have and do awfully deceive their poor souls by a sad perversion of these words: Supposing that shewing kindness to the poor, bestowing large sums of money to charitable purposes, will cover the multitude of their sins from the sight of a holy, sin-avenging God. O fatal mistake! Hence they are encouraged in their sinful practices, from such a vain, unscriptural hope. It is thy mercy, believer, to be delivered from such delusion, to know the truth as it is in Jesus. For to atone for sin was his blessed work. He hath done it effectually by shedding his precious blood. And blessed only is that man whose sins are covered by his all-perfect righteousness. Here is the true source and spring of charity, or rather love, love to God and man. "We love God, because he first loved us." 1 John 4. 19. and through the faith of this we obey his commandment, "Love one another."

Of this charity or love the most excellent things are spoken, 1 Cor. 13. It is in the heart of every believer. Its influence and tendency is to put the best constructions upon the behaviour of others; to hide their faults with a veil of love; to cast a mantle of kindness over their failings, like the painter who drew the picture of Alexander with his finger on the scar in his face: so love has a kind finger to hide the scars and blemishes, and to cover the sins of others. Love sees no faults. See it exemplified in that most illustrious exemplar of charity, Jesus. In his deep and distressing agonies and conflicts in the garden, when one would have thought his dear disciples could not be so regardless of his sufferings, so deaf to his request as not to watch with him one hour. But, instead of this, they indulged themselves with sleep. Here love covered this fault. "The spirit is willing." Love finds an excuse, "The flesh is weak." And when the same most blessed pattern of love hung expiring in the greatest agonies on the cross, yet amidst the taunts and jeers of his enemies and murderers, love vened itself with his expiring breath, "Father, forgive them," adding this as a veil or covering, "for they know not what they do."

Thus hath Jesus left us an example. He hath given us a new commandment, "Love one another." May the Spirit of love keep alive this heavenly temper, and blow up every spark into a fervent flame, that all men may know his disciples by the badge of love, and be forced to confess, "See how these christians love one another!"

Love suffers long with patient eye,
Nor is provok'd in haste;
She lets the present inj'ry die,
And long forgets the past.

Malice and rage, those fires of hell,
She quenches with her tongue;
Hopes and believes, and thinks no ill,
Tho' she endures the wrong.

He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Heb. 7. 25.

When the strong blasts of temptations blow, the swelling waves of corruptions lift up their heads, Satan casts his fiery darts, the thunders of Sinai roar, and the law threatens wrath and destruction, carnal reason pleads, and unbelief pronounces hopeless despair upon them, happy would it be for believers, if they could take up the language of faith, expressed by the children of God of old, Dan. 3. 16, 17. "We are not careful to answer in this matter: Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us; and he will deliver us." Admirable faith and fortitude! A shining example of Old-Testament saints, worthy to be imitated by New-Testament disciples. Such a conduct yields ease to the mind and peace to the conscience, while it confesses Jesus the only Saviour, and gives him the glory due to his name. And, verily, according to their faith so it was. They were saved to the uttermost. Though cast into the fiery furnace, they had the presence of Jesus, and they were delivered out of it unhurt.

Who will prescribe bounds to the salvation of Jesus? He saves according to his ability. Who can limit that which extends to the uttermost? Thou comest to God by Jesus, think not sin is too strong in thee for Jesus to save thee from. "He is able to save to the uttermost." Art thou not willing thus to be saved? Verily faith longs for it—love desires it—hope expects it. Stagger not through unbelief. The object of faith is a once crucified Jesus, ever-living interceding Man and Mediator, also an omnipotent God. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Why then should sin hold thee one moment under its power? why should it at all distress thy mind? Nay, it could not, but for thy unbelief. But is not the strength of Jesus the most powerful encouragement for poor sinners to come to God continually—a throne of grace ever open—a God of love seated on it—Jesus ever living—and always praying—a salvation to the uttermost perfection promised—and the infinitely powerful Jehovah able to effect it?

Coming to God by Jesus, O there is a sweet mystery for faith to feed upon, to be nourished and strengthened! We are confident of access; perfectly sure of acceptance by Jesus. We are not left to perhaps or peradventure, because it is not founded upon ourselves, what we have done or can do, but upon the eternal life and love of Jesus.

Christ over-rules all mortal things,
And manages all our affairs;
On humble souls the King of kings
Bestows his counsels and his cares.

Our sorrows and our tears we pour
Into the bosom of our God;
He hears us in the mournful hour,
And helps us bear the heavy load.

Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isa. 7. 14.

Jesus faith, in the character of wisdom, "I was set up from everlasting: And my delights were with the sons of men." Prov. 8. 23, 31. Therefore he would come and dwell among us, and be God with us. God in our nature. In his conception miraculous: In his birth, his person, his offices, his life, his death, resurrection and ascension WONDERFUL. O it is the joy of our faith that it has for its object "the Lord of hosts, who hath done wonderful things, and whose counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Isa. 25. 1. And here is our sweet meditation, he has appeared in our human form, a man like unto ourselves.

"And there will I meet thee," faith Jehovah to Moses, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, and from between the cherubims." Exod. 25. 22. This is significant of the human nature of Jesus, the veil, that is to say, his flesh, wherein God and man truly meet. This is the real mercy-seat, the true propitiation in which God meets us to bless us; and we draw nigh to him and enjoy sweet fellowship and communion with him. The knowledge of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, this is the very life of our souls and the joy of our hearts. How sweet is it to conceive of our Lord as becoming a babe, living in flesh for us, dying on the accursed tree, atoning our guilt, and taking away our sins. We esteem all other hopes as vain: while this only hope is consolation and joy to poor sinners. The Spirit of truth makes this manifest to us in the word, and bears witness of it in our hearts. It is this makes us keep a joyful CHRISTMAS all the year round. We celebrate Christ's birth with joy, and conceive of his nativity with gladness daily; because that day is come that "we know that Christ is in the Father, and we in him, and he in us." John 14. 20. Therefore we are always confident that Jesus is the Christ, the only Saviour of the lost and guilty, that to this end was he born, for this work he came into our world, in his birth he begun it, and with his expiring breath he cried out, IT IS FINISHED.

And what is our chief happiness? what should be our constant employ on earth? Saith the evangelical prophet, Behold this great mystery; dwell deep in constant meditation upon it; from this glorious event springs the greatest glory to God in the highest; the most perfect peace on earth, the most consummate good will to men.

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Eph. 2. 10.

Upon a survey of the works of creation and providence the psalmist cries out with admiration, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all." If such a display of wisdom and glory is visible in the objects of time and sense, which perish in the using and are destined to destruction, O what infinite riches of wisdom, glory and love are manifest in the new creation in Christ Jesus, which are of a spiritual and eternal nature?

Such is the œconomy of the covenant of grace, the glorious three persons in the ever-adorable Trinity concur in the salvation of sinners. God the Father elects in Christ Jesus to glory, and ordains good works as the fruits of everlasting love for all the heirs of salvation to walk in. Jesus, in whom they are chosen, atones for all the evil of their sins, and frees them from the condemnation of the law. But though redeemed from wrath, yet such is our nature, that to do evil we are prone, but to do good we have neither will nor power. But the divine Spirit exerts his agency upon all the members of Jesus. He operates upon them; and being his workmanship, their souls are created in righteousness and true holiness.

Outward good works naturally spring from internal spiritual life. As in nature the cause must precede the effect, the tree must be made good before it brings forth good fruit: so in grace. Hence christianity is rather a nature by Jesus Christ than a name from him. Not a meer speculation of him, but a creation in him. Not a form, in profession and letter, but a life in spirit and truth. Here is all reason and power for obedience and good works, but no cause for glorying in the flesh. How awful is that delusion of the enemy, under pretence of exalting Jesus, to depreciate the work and glory of the Spirit in the new creation? For, christian, what thou art called to in thy life, that thou art created to in thy soul? what duties thou art exhorted to in the word, thou hast strength and power to perform by the Spirit. Therefore, though sinful and lost, thou findest thyself in the first creation, yet thou art saved and righteous by the new creation in Christ Jesus. In him, being one with him, thou mayest say with Paul, "I have all things and abound." Phil. 4. 18.

Not to the terrors of the Lord,
The tempest, fire and smoke,
Not to the thunder of that word
Which God on Sinai stroke,

But we are come to Sion's hill,
The city of our God,
Where milder words declare his will,
And spread his love abroad.

The God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly. Rom. 16. 20.

It is very common for the followers of the Lamb to reason, but not right, after this manner: "How can I be a son of the God of peace? how can I be a subject of the Prince of peace seeing I am daily in war and fightings? If at any time the sweet sound of peace is heard in my heart, and the comforting sense of peace is felt in my conscience, soon also some rebel lust, some sinful passion, or some fiery dart of the enemy makes an attack upon me; hence war commences and peace is banished." Nay but, soul, Jesus is still thy peace. God is at peace with thee; glory in this always, and know this is the good fight of faith. Thy very calling is to be a soldier of Jesus. Thy present state exposes thee to enemies. Being born again of the Spirit, thy flesh lusteth against thee, and thou feelest it, art groaning under it, and striving against it. The strong man, satan, who heretofore kept thee in possession, and thou wast at peace with him, is now cast out by Jesus; therefore he besieges and attacks. The world with its vanities, its children with their smiles and frowns, promises and threatnings, animated by "the God of this world," are at war with thee; because thou art not of this world, but of the kingdom of Jesus.

That this combined power opposes thee, is a scriptural mark that thou art born of God. That thou art at war with them, is an evidence, a happy evidence of the life of thy soul and of thy faith and love in Christ Jesus. Rather let this strengthen thy confidence, than deject thy mind. Was not Jesus the Son of God because satan dared to tempt him, to question it, and tempted him to idolatry, covetousness, and self-murder? did this destroy his hope and peace in his God and Father? Nor need any temptations interrupt thine. Thy God knows thou art conflicting with satan. It is his good pleasure to permit it for a season. Yea, he knows also thou canst not bruise satan, much less overcome him. But here is thy comfort, Jesus hath done it for thee; he hath bruised the serpent's head. Thy assurance of victory lies in the almighty power of Jesus, and faithful promise of thy Father. Look up with confidence, for as surely as satan's head is bruised, the God, who is at peace with thee, is at war with every enemy that is against thee. Fight with courage; he will strengthen thee to stand against, yea more, give thee perfect victory over all the powers of darkness, all the malice of hell; and as a vanquished foe, thou shalt tread satan under thy feet shortly. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, [against the enemy] even God with a recompence; he will come and save you." *Isai. 35. 4.*

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 13. 14.

Man is an active being. Happiness is his pursuit. "Who will shew us any good?" is his continual inquiry. But to seek it from wrong objects is his constant practice. Hence naturally we are ever restless and uneasy. The new-born soul only has found the centre of true felicity, real good, and permanent happiness in the knowledge and enjoyment of the Saviour's love. Hence paradise is regained, a heaven of bliss is restored to his soul. Here is the peculiar glory of the gospel, it ever presents an object to our mind, even the Lord Jesus, from whom alone we derive peace of conscience, joy of heart, and transport of soul.

Is there, believer, a day in the year, an hour in the day, wherein thou wouldst pray to be excused from putting on the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfection of thy nature, and the adorning of thy soul? surely not: As "one made alive from the dead," the Holy Ghost, by the word, stirs up thy "pure mind, by way of remembrance." Thou art not called to dream over dry heathenish lectures of morality, nor from philosophic rules to acquire this and the other habit of virtue; neither art thou left to licentious liberty to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. But this ought to be the daily exercise of thy believing mind, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the essence of every virtue; for in this consists all thy present comfort and holiness: And by this thou wilt become dead to all the pleasing inviting objects that stand so thick around thee to beguile thy mind, and draw thine heart from its best Friend.

The miser calls his gold his own, it is his god. Hence he exercises all his affections upon it, and derives all his happiness from it. The man of pleasure is in continual search after the enjoyment of new delights, from the gay surrounding objects of a perishing world. Infinitely greater blessings are christians called to. O believer, Jesus is thine, in the exercise of thy mind and the affections of thy soul; put on thy Lord continually as thy righteousness, thy strength, thy riches, thy pleasure, thy glory, thine **ALE.** Oppose Christ to all the pleasures the world presents, to all the delights of sense, and every scene of vanity. Put on Christ in thy conscience, plead the atonement of his precious blood against the guilt of sin—the perfection of his righteousness to every demand of the law. Boldly withstand every accusation from satan with, "Christ hath died, yea rather is risen again, and ever lives to make intercession for us." Who is he that condemneth? **Rom. 8. 34.**

Strangely, my soul, art thou array'd
By the great sacred Three!

In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all thy powers agree.

The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. 1 Pet. 4. 7.

Yesterday we were born, to-day we are alive, and to-morrow we die. The sum total of the human life is justly calculated by the hoary-headed patriarch Jacob, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Gen. 47. 9. A truth this that lies level with the common observation and judgment of all men: But which is admitted into the regenerate heart and conscience only, with that importance it demands, so as suitably to affect the mind and influence the conduct. Hence the absolute necessity of divine faith, the continual need of the believing soul exercising his meditations upon the sure and certain approaching dissolution of all things. So is he taught to die daily to the perishing objects of time and sense, and to live like himself, as an immortal inhabitant of a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. To live and lean upon the beloved as the stay of ones soul, and the strength of ones hope, this is true happiness.

While all things below perish in the using; invisible realities ripen in prospect, and most powerfully engage our affections, because they are durable and eternal. Hence the soul is excited to watchfulness that he may stand—to prayer that he may be kept—and to sobriety that he may persevere. O believer, thou canst not but count drunkenness and whoredom great sins; but know also the cares, riches, pleasures, and honours of this world, as really intoxicate the mind, and cause the heart to be guilty of spiritual adultery, against thy loving lawful Bridegroom Jesus, as outward gross sins do the body. What need, what daily need hast thou to watch constantly, to be sober continually, and to pray alway?

Pride, which is contrary to sobriety of Judgment of thyself; lust and intemperance, which are inconsistent with the soundness of thy faith, the stability of thy hope, and the exercise of thy love, are ever at hand to beset thee: Therefore say, when canst thou dispense with a watchful frame of spirit? when intermit in praying to and dependence on thy God? O the sweet exercise of watching unto prayer for divine power, in prayer for sweet enlargements, after prayer for a comfortable answer from our Lord! Ever may this just reflection be upon thy mind when tempted or inclined to cast in thy lot with the carnal, and to indulge thyself in attending the bewitching scenes of sin, folly and vanity; am I now acting like one who knows the end of all things is at hand? do I behave as one in his right mind? am I watching unto prayer? can I desire, pray for, and expect the sense of Jesus' love and presence to be with me? Remember thy calling; it is to love and live upon an unseen Jesus, and to act as daily expecting to "receive the end of thy faith, the salvation of thy soul."

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 15. 57.

Death, though conquered by Jesus, though disarmed of its strength and sting by our victorious Lord, so that it cannot destroy, nay, not wound or hurt the soul of any one of his dear members; yet it is an enemy, a formidable, disagreeable enemy to nature still: and when left to our natural conceptions concerning it, he appears to us with a grim visage of "the king of terrors." We cannot get rid of our fears; nor are we able to make him put on a more amiable aspect. But when in the simplicity of little children, we go to our heavenly Father, and tell him how we are affrighted and terrified at the thought and approach of this dreadful enemy, he drives away our fears and terrors, and relieves our minds. But how does our affectionate Father effect this, by telling us we are perfect and sinless, and therefore we have overcome death, we shall never die, we have nothing to fear, death cannot hurt us? No. Glory to the riches of his grace, though we are sinners, in ourselves, and as such must die; though we are without strength to grapple with and subdue this powerful enemy; and though our bodies must fall victims to his stroke, yet "praise the Lord, O my soul: praise him, all his saints," who giveth us the victory, and hath put songs of triumph into our mouths, our hearts, not for what we have done, but our Father refers us to the glorious achievements of our elder brother Jesus: he hath obtained a perfect conquest for all the little children of his Father's family; and victory is not only proclaimed but given. Jesus is the unspeakable gift of the Father's love: So victory over death is given through Jesus: and faith to believe it in the heart, and triumph in the conscience, is his free gift also. Thus the Spirit testifies of, and glorifies Jesus. Thus his members rejoice in the truth, and are comforted by the truth.

Death was brought into the world by the father of lies. He is vanquished and destroyed by Jesus, who is essentially THE TRUTH. "The soul that sinneth shall die." Die, man, or justice must. The man Jesus, the sinner's surety, fell a sacrifice to this truth. Hence truth is fulfilled in his death. Justice is satisfied, and death is disarmed of its sting, which is sin. Jesus hath "put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. 9. 26. "And the strength of sin, which is the law, Jesus hath perfectly fulfilled in his life for us." He hath fully answered all its demands. And by him all its accusations are silenced. Precious Christ! Happy believer! What harm can the most fierce, poisonous monster do thee when it has lost its sting, and is without any strength?

Now to the God of victory
in mental thanks be paid;

Who makes us conquerors while we die,
Thro' Christ our living head.

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Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
Matt. 25. 34.

That is a joyful word to our hearts, "Come, now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1. 18. This is another precious word from Jesus to our souls, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But, O this last come, from the lips of the King, will be the most joyful crowning word of all: the best wine is reserved for the last: and every soul who hath tasted of the first on earth, shall assuredly drink his fill at the fountain-head, in a blissful never-ending eternity of glory. "Ye blessed of my Father," beloved from eternity, and blessed to eternity. Chosen in me; blessed in me with all spiritual blessings. I was given to you. I sought you, and gathered you to myself in time; and now come and live and reign with me for ever in my kingdom. O, is not the thoughts of this enough to make one wish to break through the walls of our prison, the body! Pause, O soul! call together all thy faculties; rather, O thou divine Spirit, realize the view, bring near the solemn, joyful day to our minds! give us even now to dwell on it with rapture of affections and ardour of love.

"Inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" not bought by your good works; not purchased by your well-doings, but freely given by the gift of my Father's love and good pleasure, richly prepared by his free-grace and bounty, purposely reserved for you. Come ye. Not one of my little flock shall be wanting: There is a mansion for each of you. Ere you had a being, or time commenced, the kingdom was established, places prepared, the heirs chosen. I visited you on earth, so that you loved me though you saw me not. I invisibly worked upon your hearts, and drew them out in love to myself, my cause and my brethren: so you approved yourselves my disciples by following my example. Come ye, enter, possess, enjoy what you were born for, born again to be meet for. O methinks it strikes ones heart with heavenly joy, to conceive of the loud hosannas and shoutings (O that we may catch more of the heavenly flame of love on earth!) "crying, "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. 1. 6.

Now to the Lord that makes us know
The wonders of his dying love,

Be humble honours paid below,
And strains of nobler praise above.

Additional page for the Leap-Year: FEB. 29.

One born out of due time. 1 Cor. 15. 8.

Children of God want no other; they can have no better proof of the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Jesus, than what the scriptures afford. They confess with their Master, "Thy word is truth." John 17. 17. And they are fully satisfied from the scriptures, in every point, concerning their hope of salvation by Jesus. This is the reasoning of faith, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." 1 John 5. 9. God hath born witness to his Son Jesus in the accomplishment of every type, ceremony, and prophecy of the Old Testament; and by such signs, miracles, and even his voice from heaven; which are incontestible to those who have eyes to see, or an heart to understand. But besides all this, we have an inward witness that Jesus is risen; for we find our hearts and affections drawn to him, placed upon him, and enjoy sweet fellowship and communion with him. This is according to the distinguishing grace of God: "One shall be taken and another left." The things of the kingdom of Jesus "are hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes." What shall we say to this? If we have the mind of Christ, we shall humbly acquiesce with divine sovereignty, and say with Jesus, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matt. 11. 25, 26. Grace is thine; thou hast a sovereign right to do what thou wilt with thine own; to give that to whom thou pleasest which thou owest to none. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matt. 11. 27.

Such humble sentiments possess the minds of enlightened, gracious hearts. See this exemplified in Paul. When he saw himself a miracle in grace, he counts himself an abortion in nature. He owns himself as despicable, mean and contemptible; as a child born by miscarriage, before its due time and proper growth. He confesses himself to be "least of all the apostles." Yea more, as though he wanted words fully to express the little, low, insignificant opinion he had of himself, not only the least, but "me, who am less than the least of all saints." Eph. 3. 8. He had now done with his grand pedigree, his religious privileges, his notions of fulfilling terms and conditions to obtain the favour of God and an interest in Jesus. O, now Christ was revealed to him, full of grace and truth, this stained all his former pride, laid his honour in the dust, and put an end to all vain confidence and human glorying. Strange pre-requisites Paul possessed to qualify him for the grace of God! The same Lord that wrought effectually in Peter, and was mighty in Paul, will also convert every redeemed one: "And they shall return, and come to Zion with songs [of FREE GRACE] and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isa.

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